The Beat Within

THE BEAT WITHIN ▪ A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF WRITING AND ART FROM THE INSIDE ▪ VOLUME 13.18

Hey Beat editorial note readers, what's cookin'? We are enjoying a beautiful day in San Francisco. Word has it, that we are going to have a mini heatwave. Nice.

This week, we hope to give you a glimpse of the work we have been doing outside of the workshops, given every one of you deserves to hear and be a part of the happenings in The Beat world.

By the way, today a dear friend sent me a CD of one of California's greatest country songwriters, Merle Haggard, who is from the Central Valley. Of course most of you have not a clue who Merle is, and when we tell you, you will probably stop reading this note, but hell, we'll take that chance... So the CD is put in the player, and the first song played is "Mama Tried." Have you ever heard the song? I am sure some of you old school country loving fools know this powerful song, that could have been written today, though it was written in 1968. By the way, Merle came on the scene as a maverick country singer in 1965, and wrote Mama Tried, 40 years ago, and his songs still sound so fresh, and from where we sit we're not sure there is a country singer that could even compete with his talent, plus classics like "Lonesome Fugitive," "Branded Man" and "The Bottle Let Me Down."

Allow us to share the lyrics to "Mama Tried." This is truly a phenomenal cut, and it comes in under 2 minutes and 15 seconds!

The first thing I remember knowing,
Was a lonesome whistle blowing,
And a young un's dream of growing up to ride;
On a freight train leaving town,
Not knowing where I'm bound,
No-one could change my mind but Mama tried.
One and only rebel child,
From a family, meek and mild:
My Mama seemed to know what lay in store.
Despite all my Sunday learning,
Towards the bad, I kept on turning.
'Til Mama couldn't hold me anymore.

And I turned twenty-one in prison doing life without parole.
No-one could steer me right but Mama tried, Mama tried.
Mama tried to raise me better, but her pleading, I denied.
That leaves only me to blame 'cause Mama tried.

Instrumental break.

Dear old Daddy, rest his soul,
Left my Mom a heavy load;
She tried so very hard to fill his shoes.
Working hours without rest,
Wanted me to have the best.
She tried to raise me right but I refused.

And I turned twenty-one in prison doing life without parole.
No-one could steer me right but Mama tried, Mama tried.
Mama tried to raise me better, but her pleading, I denied.
That leaves only me to blame 'cos Mama tried.

Before we move on, we do want you to know, that Merle did live the life. When he was 13 years old, he was in and out of juvenile detention facilities. He was a runner. Eventually it caught up to him and he was sentenced to the CYA's Preston School of Industry. He paroled from CYA and soon returned for assault.

In 1957 he was sentenced to 15 years time at San Quentin State Prison (he served 3 years) starting at age 19 for grand theft auto and armed robbery.

According to his bio in Wikipedia it states, "Even in prison, Haggard was wild, running a gambling and brewing racket from his cell. Merle attended three of Johnny Cash's concerts at San Quentin. Seeing Cash perform inspired Haggard to straighten up and pursue his singing. Several years later, at another Cash concert, Haggard came up to Johnny and told him "I certainly enjoyed your show at San Quentin." Cash said "Merle, I don't remember you bein' in that show." Merle Haggard said, "Johnny, I wasn't in that show, I was in the audience."

While in solitary confinement, Haggard encountered author and death row inmate Caryl Chessman (who wrote three books on death row before he was put to death in California's gas chamber in 1960). Haggard had the opportunity to escape with a fellow inmate nicknamed "Rabbit", but passed on it. The inmate successfully escaped, only to shoot a police officer and return to San Quentin for execution. Chessman's predicament along with Rabbit's inspired Haggard to turn his life around, and he soon earned his high school equivalency diploma, kept a steady job in the prison's textile plant and played in the prison's band.

He was released in 1960. Haggard said it took about four months to get used to being out of the penitentiary and that, at times, he actually wanted to go back in. He said it was the loneliest feeling he'd ever had." Haggard was later given a full criminal pardon by then Governor Ronald Reagan.

Today Merle, at 71, continues to perform all over the world for his many loyal fans.

Enough of Mr. Haggard, yet let's stay in the Central Valley for a moment as we give you a quick glimpse into our world. As you turn the pages of this latest issue, you will be introduced, thanks to our Beat colleagues Tricia Johnson and Mai Der, to the young writers in Fresno Juvenile Hall! The Beat Within is alive in the valley! Take a look on pages XXX to get your valley fix! We look forward to this important relationship with our new friends!

Last week we ventured three thousand miles to the nation's capital, and met with our old friend David Muhammad. David left the Bay Area in 2006 to help turn the Washington DC juvenile justice system also known as the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) around, and from what we saw, he is doing a great job. Props to David and his staff! David and The Beat Within have begun a new partnership, which is extremely exciting, meaning The Beat Within will begin writing workshops with the young men at the Oak Hill Youth Center (which is the CYA equivalent for DC) and is operated by the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services, in early July 2008. Look out for their initial entries this summer!

As usual, we will need to cut this note short, so we'll save more Beat news for next week, given we are running out of editorial note space, so allow us to tell you the 13.18 topics that were addressed prior to most of the writing you are about to read in this fabulous issue!

The first topic, "Art that blows your mind"- Today, we learned that the great Beat artist, Michael Orozco, has died in prison. We remember the first piece he ever sent us, because it blew us away. We couldn't' believe how detailed, how beautifully drawn and how complex a picture in pencil could be. But the beauty of art is in the eye of the beholder, so what we want to know is what art has blown you away? It could be a famous painting, like "The Last Supper," a Beethoven Symphony, a stage play you saw in school, or a book that took your breath away. So tell us in detail about a piece of art that blew you away, and why. Describe its power to reach you. Let us see through your words what you saw with your eyes.

Second topic, "When you're away"- Whenever you come to the hall, you leave people behind. Often, they are little people who don't understand where you've gone, or why. Do you ever think about what your mom or grandma or auntie says to explain your absence? Do they say you've gone on a trip? That you're away at school, or on vacation? Some other lie? Or, do they try to tell the children the truth about where you are? When you get home, are the little ones always happy to see you, or are they ever afraid of this "stranger" suddenly back in the house? What do they ask you about where you've been and what you've been doing? What do you tell them? Is it easy or hard to explain it to them? When you were small, did someone have to try to explain an absent father or older sibling to you? What do you remember about that experience?

Last topic, "One-way ticket to..."

Suddenly, someone with money turns to you and says, "I'm going to buy you a one-way bus ticket to anywhere you want to go in the world!" Where would you go? Why did you choose that destination? What do you hope to see and do there? Do you ever dream about traveling away from here to go to... Well, you tell us!

Knowing the topics, we do want to state that there are numerous pieces from issue 13.17, 13.16 and even some from 13.15. Also, we did not get to all the 13.18 edits for this issue, so they will roll over into next week's 13.19 issue!

We will close with a shout out to our newest friends in Fresno Juvenile Hall, and to the young writers for sharing their courageous voices in our important publication.

See you soon!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco, Maricopa County Arizona, Santa Clara, San Mateo, Alameda, Bernalillio County New Mexico, Santa Cruz and Marin County Juvenile Halls. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at:

www.thebeatwithin.org

From The Beat: Please welcome to The Beat Within our first writings from the juvenile hall in Fresno County, nestled in California's central Valley – the fastest growing region in California. Thanks to a partnership with Focus Forward, a local group in Fresno, and the SH Cowell and WS Johnson Foundations, for their support in launching a youth media project in Fresno called "The Know" (learn more about it at http://theknowfresno.blogspot.com), we have been able to build a presence in the Fresno area. We are very appreciative of the Fresno Probation Department and Juvenile Hall staff for welcoming The Beat into their facility. We also want to thank Carissa Phelps (www.carissaproject.com) for her support in opening up the Fresno community to the powerful words, ideas and stories of the young people in Fresno's juvenile hall. We look forward to learning more about the young people of California's central valley region as we become a consistent program in Fresno, and their words, art, ideas and stories become a regular part of The Beat within. And of course, super special thanks and props to the 80+ young people who participated in the first Fresno Beat workshops in April, for embracing the publication and our workshop facilitators and being brave enough to share their stories with us. Thank you and keep writing!

Mom Couldn't Take It No More

I lost my mother when I was seven years old. She committed suicide because my father was a drug addict. I guess she couldn't take it no more seeing him do the type of stuff he was doing. Like having the apartment full of his friends drinking and doing other type of stuff. Like using coke and he always left the bags around the apartment or bottles around the place.

And she was not thinking about what she was leaving behind. Like her daughter and her two sons behind. But I think that God had to take her because she had to take her to heaven.

-Javier

From The Beat: We are so sorry you lost your mom, that is the hardest thing in the world. How are you and your siblings managing? Who is taking care of you? We hope your mom is protecting you like a guardian angel.

Saying No

Who: My friend Trina, she wants to go and steal.
What: We are supposed to steal food and crackers
Where: My friend and I are at her house on the way to Food Maxx.
When: We do this bad thing at 8:15pm.
Why: We do it because we are high on weed and we are hungry.

-Raymeshia

From The Beat: Great job writing a play-by-play of a typical night in Fresno. We hope stealing doesn't put you back in the hall when you get out.

Don't Let The Time Do Me

It's funny to think about the word grief because the life I lead can't have any. My life is like poetry or like a book with different phases in every chapter and this part of my life I can't grieve about anything because behind these walls you cannot let your emotions get to you.

As an individual in a cage you have to hide all the pressure and pain, by my experience I know the consequences of letting out those emotions, you began to think about all the beautiful things in life like family, friends and even words like trust, love and respect but no matter what the only thing that's promised to us is death and time so let it be that I become the time and do the time but don't let the time do me.

They say cages are for the animals, then why am I locked up like an animal! If birds are meant to fly then I believe they should be free as should I.

-Mario

From The Beat: We hope you get that freedom soon. When you get out, how can you stay free so you never have to feel the pressure of these walls ever again?

Grief

Grief is something that everybody comes to term with in life I sometimes grief about all the young and OG homies, I lost over gangs and females over streets and over colors.

How I use to handle that was by going to sunset market and asking Wayne to buy me and the young homie some beer, but that got kinda old after a while.

Sometimes I feel like I want to change back time and tell everybody that I lost how they were gonna die and when but then I wake up in the middle of the night scared because I think am going to end up just like them.

I come to find out grief is a feeling that comes and goes just like friends. They are here one second and are gone the next but the way I handle my grief I think about the good times and that they are in a better place in my cell.

-Max

From The Beat: Well good friends never go away, and serious grief never does either. They made fade in and out of focus, but they are always with us, part of our lives and memories—part of who we are. You have to live, turn it around, so you can live the life that was taken away from them.

Mechanic Dreams

I have a dream that I was a mechanic.
I was the greatest of all, I mean all!
Then one day, this is in my dream only.
My dad came to me and says,
"Son I'm proud of you for your hard work."
My dad stood beside me cheering me on,
boy you wouldn't imagine how happy was I.
It was at my school graduation.
Plus we were living in a big house
my garage was covered with cars:
BMW, Lexus, Toyota, Honda, Acura, and Nissan.
My favorite one was the Lancer evo 8.
I was living a good life and boom I woke up and it was a dream.

-John

From The Beat: What a great dream, and one that could even come true! If you decide you want to be a mechanic and take the steps, it'll happen and you'll have those cars or more. As for your dad, is he supportive and helpful?

Courage To Stand Up

I say no to people that I don't know very much. I say no to anything bad or disturbing that anybody offers me. Even if it's drugs or fighting or even trying to break a law or crime.

Sometimes I would have to say no to something that I wanted or wanted to do. Like smoking weed or disobeying my mom because I probably wanted to go outside late or after curfew time.

Sometimes what I did want to do and I did, I sometimes knew I shouldn't have done it. When I went though difficult situations, I mostly had to back up my character, and my confidence of doing it. This sometimes happens or a couple times, when I disobeyed my mom and went out with my cousins and went to different places and stole things, I knew it was wrong but it was hard to say no but I did anyways.

My consequences were going to juvenile hall. I knew it was wrong but I learned the hard way. I had the courage to stand up and say no but I fell for it and did it anyways.

-Kameron

From The Beat: Good for you for knowing you have that courage, and now that you are living out the consequences in juvenile hall, how has that affected you? What will you do next time you're in the same situation?

Saying No For Me Is The Worst

I feel like I'm gonna burst, trying to get money every first,
but instead I fight a curse,
knowing it all hurt,
the pain is all inside,
homies calling to ride,
but knowing if I had a guide,
I will just put it to side,
not caring if I live or die,
because nobody wants me alive.
My life is over so why go for my strive.

-Citty

From The Beat: Well The Beat wants you alive, and we bet there are other people out there who value the words you say, the feelings you feel, the stories you tell and the air you breathe. Keep writing, keep living.

Grief

I have grieved over my grandma because she died. I did not handle it very well. The loss affected me in a lot of different painful ways.

-Nick

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your story, keep writing!

Never Coming Back

This is not a place to be. When I get out, I'm never coming back. This is my first time being in custody. I never want to come back again. When I get out I'm never coming back because I'm going to go to school and do very good all the time.

-Cameran

From The Beat: What other things will you do to make you sure you don't end up there again?

Fresno County

When I was about seven or eight years of age I lost someone in my life that I wouldn't forget, that person was my father.

I had a rough life so for growing up around drugs, violence, gangs and other stuff I had to put up with. I never had my father to keep me in line or help me stay out of trouble.

I grew up in Fresno, California and got involved in the gang life. I was respected for who I was. I wasn't treated different. I grew to love my "dogs" and hate my enemies. I guess that's the whole purpose of banging.

But as I got older I started smoking weed and drinking with the older homies. That's when all my problems started. I started to steal to support my habit. Not thinking of my mom or brothers or my sister.

I got locked up in juvenile hall and later boot camp. Now here I am only 17 years old and still locked up and in the same shhh, as I was when I was younger and here I am facing 17 years and still not trying to change.

All my relatives think I'm a travieso "bad" but there's nothing wrong with being yourself, is there. I guess I learned the hard way, was made like this not born like it. Fresno County is full of anger and gangs and love and good. I chose anger and gangs. That's the life of a child growing up with no father.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: Wow Gabriel, this is such a bold and powerful story that so many young people like you reading The Beat can relate to. Thank you for telling it like it is. One question: in the past you chose anger and gangs, but can you choose something else next? What is next for you?

Saying No

Have you ever had to make a very different decision about something you were asked or told to do, and you really wanted to do it, but you knew it was bad or that it could hurt you!

Well I have had to make decision almost everyday for the last four years of my life. Some of the decisions that I have had to make were whether or not to do drugs, should I join this gang, should I go to school, should I fight this guy, should I move here or there, who should I associate myself with, should I get into trouble or not. All of those decisions have affected my life, either in a good way or a bad way.

I will say this much though, I really wish that there was time travel so I could go back and fix some of those bad choices that I have made. As a matter of fact almost all of those "choices" or "decisions" will haunt me for the rest of my life, and I will always have to live my life wondering, "what if I had decided not to do that?"

Well life is full of choices so try to make good ones, and keep in mind "the choices you make today can make or break tomorrow!"

-Gregory

From The Beat: Take The Beat on a time travel journey with you. Tell us a story of your life how you wish things had gone down and where you'd be today if you'd said "no".

My Tragedy

The day I was raped
It took my identity,
I felt less woman
Now I realize that
I have to move on,
I wanted to wait
Until I was married
But I guess everything
Happens for a reason

-Ariana

From The Beat: Being raped is so horrible, so unfair. We believe you are strong enough to heal your heart, and when you finally do fall in love and get married it WILL be your first time. No one can take away how special it will be when you fall in love.

Them Shots

Ok well my brother-in-law had asked me if I wanted to go to a party that he heard was going to be over on the other side of town. I said that he'd have to pick me up and he told me to be ready at 10:00 so I got ready, smoked a blunt and waited.

He showed up at like 10:30 and we left.

We stopped at the store and got a bottle of Captain Morgan's. The party was hella wack so we left and got two pints of rum we stopped at the homies' and smoked a few more blunts when we were in the homies' backyard we heard a window break so we all ran out front to see as we got through the side door.

I heard these gunshots. The homie got shot twice and my brother started to shoot back and he ended up killing the dude that started shooting. He got three years for involuntary manslaughter. They said that he was trying to steal my brother-in-law's truck. The homie was cool after his wounds healed, but my brother in law still has two years to go.

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: What did you learn from this dangerous night? You do a great job telling the story, telling it like it happened, but what was the impact on you? We hope you never end up in that same situation again, losing your life or your freedom.

Fresno

I'm fourteen years old and I have been in and out of juvenile hall, group homes and foster homes. I always try my best to control my anger or when I see an enemy I would always be fighting. I really don't care about time because to me time is just time, I am always on my toes and ready to throw it down with these ninjas. I do have parents and I do care for them so at the same time I screwed up I start to think about my family. I would be in my cell saying to myself why did I do it? But then I be like forget it.

All of my other brothers and sisters are mess ups too, but really I started to follow my brothers foot steps which he is now 22 years old. I am second to the youngest and so I do have a little brother. He is seven years old and I don't want him to follow my foot steps. So I'm gonna keep my head up and stay ready.

-Lil' Jimmy

From The Beat: Being a big brother is a big responsibility, we are glad you know that and are ready to step up to the plate.

Goodbye Grandpa

When I was locked up I lost someone very close to me, someone I loved, someone that raised me since I was a kid to a young man, someone I never got to say goodbye and that I loved him. That someone was my grandpa he was strong man that never gave up he was a soldier in my eyes.

When I got locked up he was kind of upset because I was getting into gangs and started drinking and smoking weed.

When my grandpa passed I felt mad at myself because I got into a fight and didn't get to go to his funeral.

-Grandson

From The Beat: So sorry you didn't get to go to the funeral. We are guessing you got into a fight because you had all that sadness in you for your Grandpa, do you think that's true?

Angel

I asked God for a Flower
God gave me a Garden
I asked God for A Tree
God gave me a Forest
I asked God for Water
God gave me an Ocean
I asked God for an Angel
GOD GAVE ME YOU.

-Ariana

From The Beat: Who is this angel? Tell The Beat more...

Grief

Who: I lost my cousin Darnell W.
What: No one knows, but my other cousin does and won't tell.
Where: He was just a few blocks away from my grandma's house.
When: The accident happened at night. He said, "I'm going to grandma's and I'll be back."
Why: He was supposed to be back with the potatoes for grandma's house, but never came back. My grandma knew that something bad happened.

-Raymeshia

From The Beat: Grandma's are blessed – or cursed – with intuition about when bad things happen. Our hearts go out to you and your family for your loss.

Best Story Ever

Hi. My name is Raymeshia and I'm a 15 year old African American writing about fools.

I'm a fool because I decided to let go of my family who is my little sister and grandmother. I'm really stressed out.

I'm locked up because I wanted to steal something so stupid. I was with my friend Trina. We were thinking it was all cool. "Oh girl, we're going to Food Maxx and get some food."

So whenever you smoke weed, stay out of trouble because you will be just like me, locked up. I've been here for almost one month and want to go home already. But when your parents talk to you, listen to them. When they say, "Baby, your friends will always get you in trouble," they know. But if you want to be hard-headed, you will be in my seat, where you don't want to be. My best story.

My advice to you:

1. If you do any drugs stay home
2. Listen to your parents and you won't end up like me, locked up.

-Raymeshia

From The Beat: That's great advice, thanks Raymeshia. Doing drugs and being on the streets is definitely a bad combination, but in general doing drugs can slow down your life so please minimize your drug use as much as you can so you can be your smartest self!

Love for Grandpa

My mom ran out on me and my twin brother and my sisters and brothers.

Our grandpa took care of us my whole life and I love him for this. He is my heart, soul and mother, father. I love him and my grandma. I pray for my brothers to stop teasing grandpa wrong. I'm sorry to scream and holler at them. We live under his roof, not our own. I love you. I hope you get this from me, and this goes to the judge.

-Unique, your honey and baby

From The Beat: WE hope all in your family learn to appreciate your grandpa, who has stepped up huge in helping you and your brothers. That's love!

Lost Without You

A wonder in my mind, a lost thought in time

Oh how I wish death was gone for life.

He lurks around corners, waiting, just waiting for someone like you to come along.

We humans and our clouded minds don't stop to think that death might be closer than we thought.

At any moment he could grab our sisters, brothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousins and yes, even our dear mothers.

A pain and fear beyond all others grabs my heart knowing that the one person I've grown closer to than I'd ever imagine could be gone in a heart beat.

She brought me into this world struggling to keep me safely out of harms way.

She laughs with me, she talks to me, she cries with me, not only as my mother but as my best friend.

Death could be anywhere for her, alone in her room on the blackest of nights, or on a drive with my sister and I on a beautiful sunny day.

I feel a stabbing at my heart, a clenching in my stomach, a fear in my mind.
I would be lost without you.

-Molly

From The Beat: Wonderful poem we can all relate to. Keep writing, you are very talented!

Ain't About Being the Hardest Person

I have did some dumb stuff in my life that I regret and if I could take it back then I would not be in here.

I hurt someone that I shouldn't have and it is hurting me deep down in my heart.

This is my first time in here and I have been trying to be good and change my life around and be a better person in life and do right because it ain't all about being the hardest person in this world or gangbanging. It is about getting along and if you were in my shoes you would know, but let me tell you my story…

I was out with my so called homies and we heard a noise and we went in the back to see what was going on in the back and it was a man beating his girl up and I told him he was a punk and I walked away and he started to cry and he grabbed my so called homies and started to punch him in his face and then I ran over there and punched him and I beat him up bad and he called the cops and I went in my brother's house, and somebody that all of us knew had went in the house and they told my brother's girl friend that they were going to kick the door down and told use to come out with our hands up and I went out and they said they were looking for somebody in a green shirt and nobody in the house had a green shirt on, but they still took us in.

When somebody said that I had a gun and they said I had pulled it on the guy and the cops put me in front of their car and put a light on me and they said that I had pulled a gun on him and they put me in here and I haven't been praying every night and with the grace of God I will get out of here when I go back to court and get a better start in life.

-Prayer Boy

From The Beat: We hope you do get that chance to start a better life, and avoid those dark situations. But before we go we need to thank you for trying to protect that girl. No man should beat his woman, and you are a good person for trying to stop it – even if it did lead to bad consequences for you. Now, if you did or didn't, we suggest you put the gun away or stay away from those who pack!

The Sad Story of Carlos

I feel bad because Carlos got stretched. And now he has to deal with it for his whole life. He deals with a lot of pain and Owens told him to go brush his teeth. His shoes are hella big for him. He looks like a criminal so I don't trust him for that. He ate some of my chicken and he had a second degree robbery for robbing McDonalds for hella hamburgers with cheese and onions.

-Micks

From The Beat: Tell us more about Carlos. Who is he? What made you want to write about him?

Babies

Babies are good they are a joy to have! When you are going through nine months it's so much fun. When you are going to have it and you see them for the first time it is such a special moment that you and your baby have. But there are times when you are taken from your baby and they don't know where you are! It feels like it's stabbing you in the heart because you wonder what they are doing and you want to feel your baby "touch".

But one day there will be a time that you and the baby will see each other again! And just like the first time when you saw your baby it will become a special moment once again.

-Dejazzion

From The Beat: We are sorry you aren't with your baby right now. What is your plan, when you get out, to stay united with your baby?

Saying No

Saying no is what I'm writing about. This one time which happened just recently before I was in here and it's when my homie asked me if I wanted to break in a house during school and I said, "Nah man, I don't know" and he said "Well just go to third period then will you decide during class and I said alright cool." And during class I got kicked out so I was angry so I text messaged my homie and said, "Yeah I'm down."

So during fourth period we went and got away with it but the next morning I stayed home from school and as I was sitting on my couch I heard a knock on the door looked out the peep hole and saw two police officers standing by my door and when I opened the door the officer said hello may I speak with your mother. I didn't know what to think I wondered what my mom would say. And as my mom was talking to the officer the other one was handcuffing me and getting in the police car. And as that was happening I saw my mom in tears watching me leave to the police station.

While in the police station I was sitting in the interview room with my homie and he was talking about it to me. The cops came in and said "We're transferring you to Fresno County." When they said that I just looked at my homie and shook my head and now I'm sitting in here.

-Timothy

From The Beat: We're so sorry you didn't follow your better instincts, and we're also sorry you got kicked out of class that day because if that hadn't happened you wouldn't be in the hall today. What do you think you'll do differently when you get out?

Love Poem

Roses are White
Violets are Blue
I feel I might lose you,
Please don't leave me.
If you leave me
You will break my heart.
I will be in pain
Until the day you come back.
Please God don't take him away
From me,
I need him more than air.
My heart has a hole,
To fill it in I need
His love.

-Ariana

From The Beat: Tell us more about this lucky person you love, what is he like, when was the last time you talked, when do you see him next?

Mom Needs Me

I'm in Juvenile Hall. It really bothers me because my mom needs me and I can't be there because somebody lied about me hitting them. Anyway, I really want to be home to take care of my family and friends. I believe they need and want me home, my mom because she doesn't have a steady house most of the time. Half the time she stays at my grandpa's, but half the time he kicks her out because he is mean. He has a split personality. I am my mom's best friend and I have to make sure she's not alone when my grandpa kicks her out. If she has nowhere to go, I make sure I am with her so we find somewhere to go—and we usually do. I love my mom.

-Hilary

From The Beat: What a big responsibility you have in your family! We are proud of you and hope you get to go home soon.

Seeing Life in a Different Way

Let me start off by saying I live in Fresno, CA with my mom and two brothers and two sisters. I made a couple bad decisions in my life but I'm trying to change so I can go home.

On July 9th 2007 my dad passed away that was the hardest thing in my life so far. I woke up because I heard my brother crying. I asked were my little sister Stormy was at. She had went to go get help. When she came back we ran to get my mom. The cops came and ambulance took my dad. We went to the hospital and the doctor said he died. I burst into tears. I didn't know what to do. After that day my life fell apart, I was heart broken. I started stealing and got caught at Kohis then I went on probation.

I got caught again in December 11 days after I got put on probation. But being in juvenile hall I have seen life in a different way and I'm ready to change my life.

-Amethy

From The Beat: When you say change your life, tell us more about what you mean, what you want to change? We care about you and want to support your plans.

The Fight

I describe my house as a place of violence. When I go to my house I get into trouble because I come around twelve at night and my parents yell.

I suppose they have a right to yell at me because I did wrong, but they don't have the right to put me down.

Last time when I got into a fight at school, I really hurt that kid because he was calling me names. I got really mad and I lost it. I remember I punished him so hard and when I stopped fighting, the cop came to the school and arrested me.

The cop said I was going away for a long time. But I wasn't thinking about the consequences.

Now looking back I know that I did wrong and next time I will just walk away. I do know why I am here. I do good in school. I do all my work. I have been student of the month. I have a 3.0 gpa, but I am screwing up big time.

-Jorge

From the Beat: Wow, Jorge, you really messed up that time, didn't you? It sounds like you have learned from the experience, and next time, remember to just "walk away" as you say. You seem incredibly intelligent, so use your head next time, not your fist. It's not worth getting in trouble for over someone calling you names.

Gifts of Love

Well I'm going to talk about my life.
It is about a love life and a poem life.
It is called gift.
God favored me incredibly at my birth.
He touched me with a special gift,
He gave me love of beauty on the earth.
He touched my eyes extravagantly with the sight of meadows
filled with flowers upon the mountains light.
God favored me incredibly at my birth and I'll walk proud and gratefully upon the earth. My love life is amazing because my girl loves me and I love her.
But love is like God's love towards me and her.

-Aaron

From The Beat: It's powerful when you feel both a spiritual love and human love, both of which are precious gifts. We hope you continue to nurture them in your life and share your gift of love with others. All the best to you and your girl!

No Good

One day I was at a party with my friend. We were all gone off some pills and drunk. We were thizzen hard off three pills and some drink. Before we know it some guy came up to us asking if he could chill with us so we said it's cool.

Then some other guys came to the party. There were eight deep. So the guy that was chillin' with us pulled out a banger cause he had funk with the guys that came in, and they saw him so they pulled out a banger and started shooting. They killed my friend because of some guy that we let hang out with us.

I hope people know the people they are hanging out with. This could happen to anyone. After this I think about being high and drunk. Being thizzed out at parties just didn't do any good for me. It made me feel the pain of losing a good friend.

-Daniel

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear you lost your friend. Sometimes from such tragedies, we learn some of life's biggest lessons. Thanks for sharing your experience and lesson with us. Makes us think twice about the people around us.

Funeral

I have been in and out of Juvenile Hall since I was 12 years old and while I was getting locked up and running the streets my cousin Man-man died.

I didn't know what to do so I got drunk for the first time and my mom was looking for me but I didn't want to go home because I was scared and didn't know what to do so when the police took me home my mom was crying so much asking me why haven't I came home to see her she was crying so much it made me feel so bad but then my family from New Jersey started coming and then we had his funeral and the school teacher came with the whole baseball team and it was so crazy when I seen his body in that casket my heart drop to the floor and I looked around and everyone was filled with tears.

-Shandrika

From The Beat: A lot of people use alcohol to hide the pain of grief, so you are not alone. But of course, as you have learned, it's a temporary hiding and eventually you feel your tears. Tell us more about your cousin and what everyone loved about him.

It's Never Too Late

I stress a lot because I'm in and out of juvy. It sucks in here. I miss my family and the other people that care about me. I'll be facing years this time. I guess the judge finally got tired of me coming in and out.

Also, the charges get worse over time. I'm tired of many of the things I've done and I want to better myself. I think this is the biggest opportunity for me because who knows what could have happened to me. For a long time I've been in an abusive relationship. It went both ways. I fought him. He fought me. We are still trying to make our relationship work, but it's really hard. I plan on being successful, and I'm trying to make it well for me here.

A lot of people give up on themselves, but I won't. I look forward to many positive things in life. I'm 17, so I know it's not too late to give up. And anybody else who suffers, don't give up. I'm about to be 18. I've learned much. I've grown a lot and have matured as well. "It's never too late." I hope for others to be strong and not to give up, because "it's never too late."

-Ivon

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this powerful message with Beat readers! You are a natural leader, we hope you find the positive path you are seeking. When you do, you will soar.

Hoodlum Life

Ever since I was a little kid I was a hoodlum. I would run around my town stealing from people and the Pepsi Company.

One day I was stealing from the golf course and I damn near stole about 2 or 3 grand worth of golf club material.

I called the homie up and told him I had all that stuff so he met me at the river where I stored all the stuff because the river was across the street from the golf course. He drove up and honked.

I came out and we started loading the stuff up in the truck and we took off to the flea market and tried to sell the stuff so we could get a sack of meth.

We didn't sell the stuff so we went to so many places to try and sell it, but we were unable to sell it so me and the homie went to the golf course parking lot and were asking customers.

We ran into the owners' cousin and he asked us why we stole the stuff.

I told him because I had nowhere to stay or food to eat so he took me in and did not call the cops. He understood the situation I was in and introduced me to the owner of the golf course which was his cousin, and gave me a job.

-Johnny

From The Beat: Wow, you got lucky at that time, but you won't always run into luck. You're fortunate to have met someone who was willing to help you out and find you a job, but that might not be the case all the time. We hope you've learned from this experience and will find positive ways to support yourself. As for the meth, how are you addressing this illness?

Life Behind These Empty Walls

The way I feel is very sad and angry.
I feel like a caged animal and mistreated.
I feel like an animal
because I'm always behind these empty walls that don't have nothing to offer me.
I feel hella sad because I can't see my family and that also makes me feel angry
at the world. I hope I'm out soon because this is not a place for anyone to live.

-Hairs

From The Beat: It must be painful to not see your family, and feel like you are in a cage. We hope you get out soon too.

Unexpected Generosity

One day I was sitting in front of the mall and I had some cigarettes. I saw a man that was looking for some cigarette butts in an ashtray. I asked him if he wanted a cigarette. He said no at first but he kept looking for cigarette butts. So I said are you sure? Then he sat down and asked me for a paper to roll it, and I gave him some tobacco. Then he pulled out a five dollar bill. He put the unrolled cigarette on the bill and began to roll it.

He was telling me that in the old days, Jersusalem people were very gracious of men that helped the unfortunate. Then when he was done rolling the cigarette he gave me the cigarette still rolled in the five dollar bill and said "thank you for your generosity". Then he left and I was off to the drug dealer's house.

-Johnathon

From The Beat: We hope you aren't abusing drugs, because it can really take you in the wrong direction. You seem like a giving person. Your unexpected generosity impacted the man to do the same positive thing to you. What made you want to help him in the first place, without him asking? As for taking off to the drug dealer's house, we hope that is all in your past!

A Kind Stranger

One day when I was fifteen years old, I was over by Food Maxx. I needed a cigarette and I was hungry. So I was panhandling and a man came along. I asked him if he could spare a dollar.

He said are you hungry?

I said yes, so he goes wait here. So I waited and he came out with two five dollar bills. I told him thank you. And I went to the cigarette store and bought a pack of Newports. And then I went to the store and bought a large soda and a big bag chips.

The person helped me out because he felt sorry for me. He was a Christian man. He was about 24 years old. He had a blue shirt with black pants. He said he liked giving out money. I have never seen a guy like that.

When I came home with the money, my mom said where did you get that money? I said I got it from somebody. She said oh. So she took me to the 99 Cents store, and we ate food that night. My mom was thankful for the money.

My mom loves me and I love her.

-Michael

From The Beat: What a great story, thank you for sharing! It seems like the man's generosity rubbed off on you too because you shared the money with your mom. We hope when people read your story, they will think about how they can extend a hand to help others in a time of need.

Rapper Dreams

There was a time when I wanted to be a rapper. But I was told that I would have to practice a lot and write down all the words that were in my head onto paper, then after that I would have to go to the studio over and over and anyways do my best. Then after that I just started to rap off the radio beats that would come on the radio. I was doing that for a long time until I got tired of it and stopped for a couple months.

Then one day I was in the studio with my homeboy, and about an hour into watching him rap his song, he looked toward me and asked me if I wanted to rap and I said sure why not. I grabbed the mic and he replayed the beat, and I started to rap for a minute and a half. After that he was telling me I can rap real good for being the age I was. I just thought to myself about what he said. But I did not take it serious. So after a while I kept getting good speech from people that heard me rap, so since then that's what I do all the time.

-L.B.

From The Beat: Music is a powerful outlet to express yourself. Keep it up!

The Best Story

The best day I ever had was when I got the privilege to spend my vacation in Puerto Vallarta which is located in Mexico.

The reason why it was my best day ever was because I got to go to the place where they filmed my favorite movie "Predator". That was a very cool feeling getting to see all the places which were shown in the film and something else that amazed me was how much fun were the clubs down there. They played all the music I liked.

And also I met a lot of people that connected with me in many ways so that's why I say that was my best day ever. The end.

-David

From The Beat: How great you have that memory to think about while you're in the hall. Thanks for sharing!

A Bad Choice

I'm a young teen. I have lived in Fresno for a while then I moved to Clovis. I have two brothers, one younger and one older. I've been locked up several times, I'm on probation until September 13. Well I did make a bad choice and I knew I shouldn't have done it. I've been on the monitor and I'm done with that and the first time I got locked up I was fighting and running away. Well I do have a boyfriend he's from the east side of Fresno. I've stopped smoking and drinking but I'm trying to get my boyfriend to stop. Well I go to Tellman and I'm trying to get on the right track and I'm almost there.

-Victoria

From The Beat: Congratulations on stopping smoking and drinking. Keep moving on the right track, and keep telling us more about your story.

Prison Cell

Stone walls, and iron doors.
Sitting here and sitting there
Walking through a prison cell
Staring at these prison walls
Every night I lie in bed
and cry myself to sleep
In my dreams I leave this life
And find a place I'm happy at
When I wake the things I see
Is the thing I'll dread for life.
Yellow walls and cement beds
Lying here and staring there at my very own prison cell.

-Molly

From The Beat: Great job painting a picture of what it's like to be locked up. We hope that after you cry yourself to sleep, you have sweet dreams of what life will be like when you get out. Keep writing!

Making The Best Of It

Sometimes people make the wrong decision and in my case I ended up in here. Well I guess that's what happens when you hang with the wrong crowd and make ignorant choices, but what I think is the worst about being in here is that you have too much time on your hands. Sometimes it can be a good thing but for me it's the opposite especially because I have a lady and beautiful child that I fear won't wait for me, but it was my wrong choice making that put me in here so I have only myself to blame.

On the bright side I plan to change for the best and hopefully I can become a family man who is well educated, for it was my decision to become a man sooner then planned, now I feel I must step to the plate and handle my responsibilities.

-Oscar

From The Beat: It must be difficult to be separated from your lady and child because of some bad decisions you made. Having a child is a huge responsibility, so do you have ideas of how you will "step up to the plate"?

Why I Don't Like It In Here

I don't like it in here because I miss my family so much. That's why I am here and my family misses me too and I miss my boyfriend so much. He loves me and I love him, but I just want to go home so much, I want to not be here.

-Monique

From The Beat: Being away from family is such a hard part of being locked up. What can you do when you get out to make sure you can stay home for good

Let Me Tell You About The Life I Chose

When I was a young teen, I was put in my first foster home ever, even though I was separated from my family. But I guess you can just say I was a bad child, but that wasn't until April 2, 2003, when everything changed my life. My mother was murdered, and I, being only 11, still didn't understand what was going on.

Then, just my luck, my dad died 3 months later, so I moved in with my sister. So that's when I became a bad child.

My sister couldn't handle me anymore so she put me in a foster home, hoping it would change me. But it didn't—by that time I was running away and doing what I wanted.

Then I met a guy. He was 17 at the time and just downright handsome, but I didn't want to do anything with him 'cause I was too scared so I turned myself in.

Then they sent me to San Francisco, when I kept on wanting to go back to Fresno, but until I turned fourteen, and got turned out to the game, I started prostituting, and selling drugs at the same time. But I was making more money prostituting. But one day when I was on Golden Gate, I got arrested for attempting to sell cocaine.

So when I got out a month later, they sent me back to Fresno, where I ran back into my papi, now he's 18. But I had a kid by him when I was 15, and now he's 20, and I'm 16, and I'm in juvenile hall for prostitution. But I love him, he's my turn out folks and my papi, so now I got two months to go 'till I get out and can be reunited with him and my son. But until then I shall miss his chocolate skin color, and his sexy looks, but him and my son are my only loves, and I don't want anybody ever to take his place. Oh yeah, by the way, I am Latina and Filipino, half and half, and my son is black and mixed with what I am. And this is my story, there's way more to it than this, but this is just a shortened version of it.

-Carmella

From The Beat: You have such a story to tell, we are lucky to read this short version. We hope you keep writing for The Beat and telling us more about each part of the story, what was going through your heart and mind when you feel in love, when you were pregnant, when you first held your child, when you were walking the streets. So many girls have been where you have been, what advice would you give them to take care of themselves?

My Birthday

One day I ditched school. The court ordered me to go there for a program DRC (Daily Recording Center) for 180 days. I went there for 1 week and 1/2. I was on the ankle monitor at the time. I got bored of going. So I ditched two days.

On the 2nd day I didn't go back home because probation was looking for me. So I cut my ankle monitor and went on the run for 5 1/2 months.

For the first 2 1/2 months, I slept at a friend's house. Then she kicked me out so I started to live like a bum. I slept on a Starbucks roof for the rest of the time being. I had a tarp strapped down to an AC (air condition) to make a roof over me where I had my sleeping bag and other belongings.

A week before I turned myself in, I got sick and tired of being sick and tired, of looking over my shoulder all the time. From then on I have been trying to change direction.

-Louisiana

From The Beat: Wow, it must have been difficult to turn yourself in, but we're glad you did the right thing. It's a step, as you say, to changing directions and going toward a more positive life. Stay on that track, you survived living on a Starbucks roof, you can make it through this too!

A Changed Person

I am in here for something I shouldn't have got in to. It was none of my business, it was my friends, but like a dumb person, I thought I should help him and I did.

Well now I am in here wanting to go home, but before I didn't want to. I wanted to be in the streets all night long and smoke and have fun, not worrying about my little brother or my little sister, not even my mom. But now I know I need them more then ever. I need to show them that I do care and love them with all my heart, no joke.

This place made me change it made me to a new person, a new person I know my mom and family would love now. I know they would 4reals. I just need a chance to show them, and everyone that thinks I can't change, all I need is one shot to prove them wrong that I have changed. I know my mom knows I changed. She tells me when she comes to visit me she says "I can see it in your eyes that you have changed." And I tell her I am more respectful, more faithful, more honest, more responsible, and more loving more then ever, and I know she believes me.

Only if the judge knew that I know he would let me go and give me another chance, 'cause I know I am gonna change. I'm gonna get a job and more stuff, like go to college and get into arts and media classes. I just wanna be a good role model for my little brother, my little sister and my nephew. I just wanna show them right from wrong. I just want others to see I have changed for reals, only if they know how I felt and that I cry always at night, 'cause I wanna go home to show my mom and my family that I love them so much, more then ever!

-Armando

From The Beat: It sounds like you've come a long way, and we're proud of you for wanting to make a change in your life. We can hear it in your voice. Second chances do come around, so we hope next time you make the right choices. Your family is very lucky to have you.

Strong Family

Well I made a choice that I shouldn't have made, but I ended up in JJC again and now my life is starting to twist and I'm not ready for the things that are gonna come my way. I should've listen to my first thought and stayed home, but no I didn',t and now my family is split in different ways and reasons. But I'm doing okay now just trying to accept the fact that life is rough and to do the best I can and hope I can do this on my own.

I'm missing my family and friends and lover. All I'm tryin' to do is get in contact with my love so I can know I'm not alone and know I'm trying to wait for my day to get released and be free and be with everyone I love and care about I want to reach out to my family, that I'm doing the best I can and hope that I get to see them again, but my love is the only one I can really talk to and not mess up with. I do love her even if we are both girls. I love her but my family is my strength and all I want to do is finally get my life straight and focus.

My lil' sis Jazz is my best sister ever and I want to do more for her and support her through all tough times and I hope she doesn't follow my steps and lives a better life than mine. I love my mom even though we have had tough times and had many arguments. I want her to know she's the only one that has the strength to put this family back together in one piece. My big brother is my only brother and we're close. We might fight but blood is thicker than water and he's my only big brother and I look up to him I wish good luck to my family and hope things work out soon.

-Tiffany

From The Beat: You have a strong family! They will help and support you when you get out. Especially, focus on being a good role model for your little sister and that will keep you strong.

The Last Hit

"WOW," I'm 15 years old sitting in the Fresno juvenile hall. I just got arrested for stealing a bottle of alcohol. I'm doing six months in a substance abuse unit.

Yes I am a drug addict and have been since I was 12 years old. Growing up I was around drugs. My parents were "Hippies" and themselves were kids having kids. There were 5 of us all together and our parents didn't have a clue to what they were doing. The one thing I remember most is that my parents were never around.

My older sister Cassie was my mom. She raised me and taught me every thing I know. I was a happy child most of the time but things started to change when Cassie moved out. I was in 4th grade and really confused about life. When I got to 5th grade and moved in with Cassie things started to make sense again. I started living with her and felt like I belonged again, like I had a family who cared and loved me, like everything good in my life she to left me, she moved to Florida the summer I was going into 7th grade.

I started hanging out with my older brother Abe. He smoked weed and drank a lot so before I know it I'm doing the same, I slowly stopped going to school and then slowly stopped coming home. I meet new people who did more fun and interesting drugs.

I started slamming Heroin at the age of 13. I also developed an eating disorder and within a year weighed less than 70 pounds. Hospital bed hooked up to a bunch of different machines. And who should come to visit, but the only person who ever loved me, my sister Cassie. She was so sad, and she wouldn't stop crying, she had no idea what had been going on with me.

When I finally got out of the hospital I went to live with her. I got sober went back to school and at the time life seemed absolutely perfect. That was until I started high school. I hung out with the wrong people and started getting back into my old habits. My sister started to notice my attitude change and the massive weight loss. She was a concerned parent and tried to help, but I shut her out and ran away. So I get locked up and spend six months sober and getting help, things seemed like they were getting better. Wrong. As soon as I got out I hooked up with this guy I met in the hall, he was a heroin addict and got me back on the stuff.

Before I knew it I've run away again and landed myself back up in the hall. This time I'm not going home I'm going to a group home. And what do I do I run away yet again, and yet again I'm back in the Hall but this time things are going to change. I've taken my last hit I'll ever take. When I get out of here whether I go home or I go to another group home my life is going to change. I'm going to stay and change my life around and do better for myself this time.

I'm going to prove to Cassie that I do love her and want to live with her and that I am going to be a better person. And that was the last HIT I will ever take.

-Maggie

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your powerful story with The Beat. You are lucky to have your sister to inspire you. We believe you can do it!

He smoked weed and drank a lot so before I know it I'm doing the same, I slowly stopped going to school and then slowly stopped coming home.

Gina's Crazy Mind

I'm 18 years old. I have a 1-year-old son whose birthday's on May 16, 2005. I have lived in Fresno all my life. I have four sisters and two brothers. And my mom is a good mother, I love her so much.

I've been locked up 7 times in a Juvenile Hall. I'm addicted to Meth, which is hard. But I'm trying to stop now. For 1 year and 5 months. Things in my life are hard but I'm letting that get to me. I also was in a relationship with a female things didn't work out too good. But now this time getting locked up I'm gonna spend more time with my son when I'm released.

And now I have another girlfriend who I'm gonna stop smoking Meth with because she is hella pretty and I love her, and mostly my baby boy. But now things are different for me. And I'm so happy that I'm giving up Meth for my girl and my son, and Ivon.

-Gina

From The Beat: We are so happy to hear your are giving up meth. It is such a harmful drug, and it's hard to give up. You are lucky to have a girlfriend you can struggle with together. You can keep each other strong!

The Stranger

I was in the grocery store and I only had three items, but the line was super long.

The lady in front of the line let me cut and I gave her a dollar. I was in Clovis and I was walking down the street with some friends, and some guy yelled out his window and called me a wigger.

Then some guy who was in the car behind him hopped out and beat his bottom. I was getting jumped by three guys cause they wanted my shoes. So I was fighting all three of them at the same time. Some guy in his car honked the horn and they didn't stop, so he and his little bro who was a young teen helped, and together we won the fight.

Me and dude became superheros. I was fighting Doctor Doom, Venom, the Joker Lex Luther, Sand Man and the Boogie Man, 'cause they owed me five bucks from poker. Then Batman, Superman, the Incredible Hulk, Spider Man and the X-Men came and we took their money.

-Mj

From The Beat: Life out in the real world is stressful, and we all need the help of superheroes sometimes! Thanks for writing this creative piece.

The Believing Story

As I was sitting in my room, I had been praying for a while about graduating. I'd been not stressing but really worried about my future and where it was heading. In the Bible it says give all your worries to God and He'll work everything out. And that's by praying. Today as I sat there, I was like, "I know I passed this test, God's given me the courage and faith to believe in myself." All I was waiting for was to get my test scores back from the CAHSEE Math. I'm a TA in the school here, and sure enough the Administrative office called and said I had passed the test. The scores had just came in today, so, as school was let out I went to my room and prayed and thanked god for giving me that opportunity to move on with my life. Also I thanked him for the strength to believe in myself. Now that's the Best Story!

-Precious

From The Beat: Congratulations! Passing the CAHSEE is a huge achievement, we are so proud of you. What's your next step after high school? College? A job?

The House

The hood is somewhere everyone can go, even you so what it do! You can come and chill, smoke bomb weed, drink Carlo Rossi and have some fun. We call it the hood house so come and spend the day with us, and I bet you will want to come back guaranteed. What we do at the hood house is a lot of things, like the homies be at the hood house, and we have girls, weed, drinks. Basically we just have fun. It's like a little get together so that's why we call it the hood house.

-Young Active

From The Beat: It sounds like you and your friends spend a lot of time at the Hood House because it is fun. Is it also because there is nothing else to do? If there were more fun alternatives, such as youth programs or recreation centers, for you and your friends, would that help move you into a more positive environment? Consider where the Hood House has taken you, so wake up and make some positive changes!! Put the drink and smoke down!

Revenge feels great. But the down side is getting locked up and put away from your family.

Revenge

How does it feel to get revenge?
To get revenge, it feels good
especially if someone hurt you really bad and you want to get back at them.
Retaliation is a must and when you get them back you are happy at the end,
and that's pretty much it.
Revenge feels great.
But the down side is getting locked up and put away from your family.
It hurts you and hurts your family if you're locked up or dead.
That's the down side. It affects your family and your loved ones.

-Kalifas

From The Beat: So if you were put in a new situation where you had to take revenge, what would you do? Do it? Or would you think about your family?

No Revenge, No Fear

I think that if there was no revenge in the community it would be a much better environment. Also it would be a much safer for you to go anywhere that you want and not have to worry about getting shot. And people would not have to worry about getting shot. And people would not have to move to a certain side of town to avoid violence. Or be afraid to be on a certain side of town.

Also it would save a lot of innocent lives. People would live to be old without having to worry about when they are going to come back for what they did. Also, it could be bad because if you don't take revenge people can just keep coming and do stuff to you because they think you are afraid. But I think that people should not take revenge.

-Regis

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing both sides on this topic, although you're ultimately right, people wouldn't have to live in fear if we could all just forgive one another.

The People I've Lost

I remember when my homeboys, also my cousins, Ronaldo and Jonathon got murdered. They were walking home with Ronaldo's two-years-old daughter Genesis. A rival gang drove up and shot Ronaldo four times, Jonathon two times and just barely missing my niece.

The worst part out of it all was being locked up and not able to attend their funeral, but that was not even the worst part.

Two and a half weeks later, my ex-boyfriend Lil' Manuel was shot at a sideshow over a small misunderstanding.

But guess what? I was locked up for that too. Then to top it off, I got sent to a group home in Fresno, and my older brother said that guy who killed Manuel still isn't caught.

Then to make matters worse my homegirl Stephanie was beat, and shot, and left behind two young beautiful children. She was only 17 when she died.

What sucked was my group home wouldn't even let me go to her funeral. So much has gone wrong in my life. Like I got terminated from this group home and sent back to Juvenile Hall.

So hopefully when I get out of the hall this month, I'm going to stay good and behave but most of all go visit the loved ones I've lost, and hopefully not end up 6 feet underground.

-Ashleigh

From The Beat: Wow, that's a lot of people to lose. Thank you for sharing your grief with The Beat. Writing about it will help you heal and make peace with all this violence. Please share more with The Beat about these people your community has lost.

The Stranger/ The Days When I Don't Wanna Go Home

I remember all those times I asked people for cigarettes, and people helped me out during my time of need. I don't believe it was only people being kind but karma. I'm a firm believer in karma. I recall the days when I always had a lot of money and at least 3 packs of cigarettes on me.

During those days, it would be nothing for me to give a friend, even a stranger I've never met before, a cig or two, maybe even 3. I believed some day when times were no longer easy for me, friends and strangers would repay me and they did.

In my situation of being a runaway, I know what it feels like to have people help me out.

-Robert

From The Beat: It's true, when you do good to others, you often receive good in return. Your kindness is an example to everyone. How did you come to believe in karma?

R.I.P. Cruzito

On October 23, 2005, my cousin Cruzito was killed. He was with his friends at a nightclub when a young man from a different gang came from behind and stabbed him. He stabbed him with a broken beer bottle in his tummy. My cousin died two minutes later in the arms of my brother Victor. When I heard the bad news, I was in shock. I had seen him two weeks before that.

'Till this day, I always remember the last thing he told me before his death. I will always remember him and love him.

-Ab

From The Beat: What was the last thing he told you? Was it a positive message? A negative one? A seemingly meaningless comment, or a deeply personal observation? Thank you for sharing your story.

Thankful

My name is Brittany and I'm 17 years old. I've been in JJC in Fresno, California since March 13th 2008. I've made some bad decisions in my past and I am now dealing with the consequences. I have a wonderful family, great friends, and an amazing boyfriend. My family is really sticking by me through all of this and for that I am truly thankful. When I get out of JJC I want to clean myself up and really do something with my life. I have a twelve year old sister and a nine year old brother and I'd really like to be there and watch them become successful people. I've wasted years of my life. I can't get back, so now all I can do is look forward to the years I have ahead of me and try to make them wonderful. I want to make my family proud, be the best friend I can be, love my boyfriend all I can, I mostly want to be the best sister I can be.

-Brittany

From The Beat: If you want to make them proud, then you will. With your positive attitude, you DO have a lot to look forward to.

Grief

Grief is pain, pain you can't handle, when you lose someone you love. When you know you can't do anything to help that person live on. When you feel cold tears running down your sad little face and can't stop time from running when he's strapped on an air mask trying to stay awake.

Grief never seems to fade away as memories still are here till this day. I still remember his beautiful little face trying to fight the pain that was fading minutes and heartbeats away from his life as God wanted him for an angel on Christmas day. I will always have your smile in my heart 'cause that's what keeps me moving on! Rest in Peace Kevin Vasquez.

-Lala

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this perfect description of grief with us. Keep writing!

Mom Please Help Me

Mom please help me. I'm crying out to you loudly, the other night I woke my little sister up.
Mom, please help me be me and not some entertainer pretender on TV.
Mom help me come to the conclusion that I'm not grown now but you are. Is it because I want to be grown like you, pretty like you, and rich like you?
Mom, please help me stay in school and help me understand that running the streets ain't cool.
Mom, please help me succeed and achieve all the goals that I've ever dreamed of.
Mom, help me wake up from this terrible horrible nightmare that I've been in for 17 years.
Mom, please help me live my life being the little innocent girl I once was I used to kiss you on top of your forehead just because.
Mom, please help me love the ones that love me and leave the ones that don't care for the ones who care for me and dislike the ones that won't.
Mom, please help me be the girl that came out of you. I want to be the real Desmyn.
Mom, please help me.

-Desmyn

From The Beat: What a powerful letter to your mom! We want to know more about you and your relationship with your mom, your relationship with yourself. What has pushed you away from success so far, and what is pulling you back? We hope your mom gets to reach this letter.

Pour Me Another

All she wanted was a little bit of solid
Feels like love, it doesn't matter what you call it
Heals those cuts or hide 'em underneath the polish
Break another promise and take me as a hostage (take me)
Hold your job down and let the zombies crowd around
Thanking mommy's god that it's cop town.
Keep it safe for me, while I chase a fantasy
Swerving through the galaxy, searching for a family
Happily surrounded by planets and stars.
She was stuck uptown, you was landing on mars.
Its all screwed up now, caught your hand in the jar.
Another small step back for the man at the bar (hey bartender). Spill a little bit of blood on the street.
For love that goes for those who know that they drink too much. And hold your own glass up to the heavens.
Take a little time and try to count the seconds.

(Chorus x2)
It goes, pour me another, so I could forget you now.
Pour me another, so I could come let you down.
Pour me another, so I can remember how.
True that I am to this addiction of you.

Drink it all away, numb it down to none.
Stay awake tonight and wait for the sun.
You say you hate your life, you ain't the only one.
Let you frustration out the gate and watch the pony run.
One double, for the hunger and the struggle.
Two, for the fool trying to pull apart the puzzle.
Three, now I smile while I wait for your rebuttle.
By the fourth, I'm just another child in a bubble.
Trying to play with the passion and the placement.
Just to see what these people let him get away with.
Still trying to climb a mountain for you.
Hammer in my hand, still pounding on a screw.
She don't listen so he don't speak no more.
Nobody's winning 'cause neither is keeping score.
Don't wanna think no more, just let me drink some more.
Pour me another, 'cause I can still see the floor.

(Chorus x2)

Live life tipsy, still if it don't fit right with me
Kiss my whiskey, lift my lips, press to my angel.
Swallow it and leave her empty bottle on the table.
Let the past fall, making faces at the clock on the back wall. Countdown to the last call, ask all these people that make sounds.
"How long does it take for the pace to break down"
Another little trophy.
If only I could walk a straight line, I'd make it home free.
And everybody in this bar thinks they know me.
And my story like "poor me" (yea pour me another homie).
I can count the days 'till you come back
Or I can follow them sunrays down to the traintracks.
I can stumble drunk over hope and love
Or I can keep drinking until I sober up (hey waitress).

(Chorus)

-Big Keno, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Quite an amazing piece. There are lines in this poem that are genuine knockouts. Is this work yours? All of it? Or are you honoring a poet-hero by repeating his lines? If so, the best way to do that, and the most ethical way to do that, is to simply quote him and give him credit. We think the narrator here, be it you, or someone you are 'honoring' understands the predicament and troubles of the character in the poem. Powerful yet disturbing piece.

Go Home

I was the guy that everyone saw at everyone else's house, eating their food, using their money. You would think I'd feel bad, but I didn't.

Their parents wouldn't tell me to leave because I was homeless, so they let me stay. I never really looked at how they felt, just at what would benefit me.

Thinking about it now, I feel I should've put them into consideration. All my friends would tell me "go home" or "call your mom, she misses you", but I never listened. I wanted to prove to my mom that I can live on my own. But I realized what for.

I didn't think about my mom, my brother, sisters, everyone. Although I was fine on my own, I was doing the worst ever in my life. I was hurting my family, hurting my body. I needed to go home but never wanted to. I realized it wasn't to prove something to my mom anymore. I was being spoiled. I wanted everything to be about me - not seeing the pain I was causing. I feel like I was killing my mom, now that I think about it. But it's too late now. I've realized my mistakes. I'm going home now, I'm going home.

-Big Keno, Santa Clara

From The Beat: These are important moments of self discovery. Honesty can be painful, but it's a quality without which positive change is impossible. You're growing, Big K, you're growing. Btw, excellent thoughtful writing, keep it up!

One Way Ticket To...

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Na-Na. But I'm gone talk about my ticket up out of here,

Man, the only one-way ticket I want is to get out of California for a couple of years, go to college and do the right thing for a change. It ain't that I'm scared of the streets or beef, it's I that I'm tryin' to change my life... or try.

I think that is the only way out of the beef and out of the city and to keep me out of the devil's way. I'm tryin' to break in college and steal all the knowledge. I'm out. That's my one-way ticket.

Keep y'all heads up. Love Always.

-Na-Na San Francisco

From The Beat: Damn, boy, when you get serious and stop clowning, you can really put it down. This is right on the money, and we hope you are able to follow through on this plan. We especially like that line, "break in college and steal all the knowledge." That's the greatest thing you could steal, because you can never lose it! It's one of those treasures that can only get more and more valuable as time goes on. You can do it, Na-Na.

"Troubled Soul"

Fill my blunts with my memories
Smoke 'em until they gone
I thought life was a fantasy but there's no yellow brick road
So I put up with nightmares and wake up in a cold sweat
I try to brush it off but there's too much stuff on my chest
So I pray to the lord and ask him why all the pain
I don't get no answer so I stick to my game
But if I didn't have God I think I might go insane
'Cause all this stuff on my chest is too much to maintain
The money, the drugs, the childish games, tormented souls,
Rejected angels, mislead goals
And futures strangled
Try to live good, but the path is tangled
So 'till it's straight they live life like a table.

-Big Keno, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Why all the trouble young homie? You don't have to make life hard on yourself. Life is already hard as it is. You said it yourself all the childish games, mislead goals, leaves futures strangles. So why keep going that route if nothing good is gonna come out of it?

I Wonder

When I'm away from my family and friends locked up in here in a cell all day, I wonder, "Have I let my father down all the way to the ground?" I can't wait until I'm found free as a bird, going to school every day, cool because I don't wanna be the fool sitting in a cell all day when I could be getting my education, walking the stage with all my diploma in my hand. Yeah!

I'm the man now. I'm counting hundred grands, man (I wish).

I wonder if I would've stayed home that Saturday night instead of hopping in that car, I wouldn't be behind bars looking afar, wondering who's thinking about me, missing me, wanting me to come home. But instead, I'm here all alone, no phone to call anybody.

But soon I will be out, out and about, know what I'm talking 'bout? I wonder if I can last and get past all this hard time — probation, school and a job all at once. Man, nobody wants to be my number one fan, hand-by-hand with me.

I wonder if you can do better, be a better role model. But I know one thing, when I get out I'm going to do my best to shock the world and show everybody that me, a black young man, 16-years-young, will succeed in life, be somebody, be a man! I wonder if you can be a man.

-Whooda

From The Beat: All those "what ifs" are only useful if they change the choices you make in the future so that you don't repeat the consequences of the past. It sounds like you have already learned this critical lesson, and that you plan a very different way of acting once you get out of here. We applaud that decision. As we like to say, there's no better revenge than success! And school is the key to that success, so don't forget the promises you make here, and good luck!

Sorry Mom

I'm just a youngsta growin' up
In the bay where I was raised,
Through my life I had to deal
With all the stress and the pain.
I put my mom through a lot
Now thinkin' back I regret it,
I know I can't change the past
But I can change the present.
I wanna make a difference
And leave my old life behind,
Because the life I'm livin' now
Is just a life full of crime.
And I can see now
Back then I was blind.
I was ignorant, dumb,
And never spoke my mind.
But if I did
I wouldn't even be in this mess,
I wouldn't have got locked up
Putting my mom through the stress.
She never gave up tryin' to help
And it was all out of love
I bless the Lord for givin' me a mother
Sent from above.
And I can honestly say
She is my one and only
I love her with all my heart
No one can take that from me.

-Rascal, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem to your mom, just in time for mother's day. Putting your thoughts into words is a first step towards making real changes in your life, changes that would make your mom proud. But words count for nothing without action, right? What will be your first action?

Hated By Many, Loved By The Same

What's up Beat. I'm go spit this little "rap."
I rather speak on what I done
Been through ninja what I done seen
I rather kill myself before I live a lie, ninja
I rather turn informant, ninja,
I rather fry my momma
Lost me to the streets
I told her don't cry 'cause if she understood real
She should understand why one slip
And these streets crackers a have yo' life
I done had plenty money, ninja, but never paid tithes
I was caught up in this thuggin', I apologize
You call that boy yo' dawg, but would he really ride
He know how to get money, but would he testify
I don't care snitching sometimes, I can't buy
Rather I sell a hunnit thou or I sell a mill
The fact remain the same, ninja, I'm still real broke
My heart hurt when they gave my lil' homie fifteen years
I put ah cast on my heart and placed it with tears
He told me:
"Rocket, I'm living through you while I'm in here"
The realest shhh I ever heard
That shhh gave me chills
But I'm go get that time of him if it's God's will
I don't know when God's coming
That's my only fear
Cut it short, I been dealing with envy ever since I was
legit Hated by many, loved by the same,
So I'm even
I put my hand on the Bible and swear to tell the truth
You like to hear lies, I'm the wrong ninja to listen to

-Rocket, San Francisco

From The Beat: If we're reading this rap the way you intended it, it sounds like you've come to some important conclusions about how little the game has given you (and your lil' homie), and how much you've had to give up. Is your fear of God about what you've done in your past, or what you hope to do in your future? Karma is a balance of the bad with the good, so if you start building up the good side of the scales, how do you think God will judge you?

My Chinese Family

So far, my family believes I have been working for my pops for the past four months. My mom does not want to further disgrace my immediate family's name any more than it already has been.

My Chinese family does not look at our family's spirits rather than its successfulness. They do not understand how hard it is for my mother to raise three children by herself in a city where your income requires six figures to get by. She is often put with the burden of having to explain my situation falsely. Having to lie and at the same time knowing her son is stuck in a building where the world does not rotate must deteriorate my mom's spirits.

My Chinese background is successful and has expectations that my family has been unable to keep up with. I feel sorrow for my mom who is constantly being harassed by the other family about income, choice of boyfriends, custody of my younger sister, and our living situation. Anyway I got to go, free my ninjas! ☺

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: Once again, you've opened your mind and heart and shared their contents with us. We feel the pressure your Chinese family puts on your mom, who is doing the best she can with what she has. Your path must be to change the things that have stripped you of your freedom, then use those rare gifts you've been given to help your mom and your family and yourself. And when you say, "free my ninjas," we hope and believe you mean, "Free everyone!"

My Eyes Are Opening

This is my second offense... This is my second strike... This is a second fight... and still it is a second chance for me to get released or sent to YA. But, it's a second chance for me to open my eyes to what's really going on. I'm taking the places of my homies before me. This is just a vicious circle that will keep on going until we educate our little brothers and sisters.

The messed up thing about all this is that once I leave here, someone is going to take my spot. But, hell, though, there is too much shhh to be doing out on the streets besides reppin' our 'hoods, 'cause we all from a set, whether you with the shhh or not. But you dumb as shhh if you been in and out of here and haven't realized that this shhh is stupid as hell.

There's ninjas in the pen with their sets tatted up on they heads saying there's is so much more to life than our 'hood. We just juveniles, so now's the time to wake up, if not for yourself, than for your mom who's spent racks on raising you, spent hours visiting you, spent her life trying to teach you the right things to live for success, and spent her tears for your selfish ass who's trying to be with the shhh.

But damn, all I'm sayin' is use your time, and enjoy it, whether it's months or years. Always remember where you come from just don't let your pride hold you down. Listen to the wise words that will come your way, and soak it in, don't shut it out. Because your mentality will always stay with you. It's just up to you to keep it in check.

So as I've said in the past, work on bettering yourself mentally, physically, and intellectually. You will thank yourself in the future. The road ahead is long as hell, so make a plan for yourself right now.

Thanks for listening, and hope y'all the best at court.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: You say such uplifting and important things, and you give such excellent advice, it's hard for us to imagine how you caught two strikes. What do you think has changed in you from the time you committed your crimes until now? How has your mentality developed to where it is today? What influenced you the most to bring about the obvious changes in how you think and how you act?

Art That Blows Your Mind – The Mona Lisa

A piece of art that blew me away was a historical painting that on the surface looks like a regular sub-par painting. The painting I speak of is of course the Mona Lisa which is a simple painting of a female or rather a male dressed up as a female and passing for the said picture.

After learning about techniques involved in painting the picture I had new respect for the artist who completed the masterpiece. The complex painting techniques were already of their time and caused controversial talking all over, either in praise of the grand painting or in under-appreciation of the work at hand.

In my opinion it amazed me that a man just experimenting with new mediums and trying to figure out new talents found a spark in his art work that in now so widely acclaimed as being the best painting that has ever been created. It shows that the greatest packages are often found by accident..so we would all do well to experiment.

-Keith, Alameda

From The Beat: It's good to see the depth of thought you put into your critique of the Mona Lisa. Why do you think that the Mona Lisa was really a portrait of a man dressed like a woman? We haven't heard anything else to indicate this is the case. But we agree with your main point 100%. DaVinci's experiment ended up creating a monumental piece of art, advancing the craft in a way that others could build upon it in later years. What experiments look promising for you to try in your own life, so you can get positive new results?

Mac and Cheese

Pointless entertainment
Like repeating the same word until it has no meaning.
Interruptions of self destruction at gunpoint,
Whose point?
No point, who said?
I said. He said.
And we all agree,
That the only helpful thing lately
Seems to be Speed
On packages that no one else can read,
But they're still taken, unlawfully taken
Stolen from the hands of on-lookers,
Rioters, writers, fighters, and liars
They are only lying to themselves
Cuz they believe it helps because it sells.
But is it real to be able to steal
And to not give a shhh
From who or what you took
As long as you can get your dope?
Nah... I don't think so.

-Fidgett, Santa Cruz

From the Beat- Wow! Good work! It sounds like you have had much life experience for someone of your age. We are glad you can express that through your writing. You have a real gift. Keep yourself on the path which will surround you with those who share your gift and can nourish it in you. It can be hard to break old patterns and have a fresh start; especially when you have had experiences such as yours. You can do it. There are lots of people around you who can help.

I Wanna Be Free, Feel me

What's good y'all? Man, this be yo' boy Young Heat. Being in the hall ain't cool, but you know yo' boy gotta keep his head up, mess with the real, not the fake.

When I get out this thang, I'ma try not to come back to this thang. But you know everybody say that, but I'm fo' real. In my head I'm thinking right, so when I hit the streets I know what I want — a job. Get it right, feel me?

My mom passed away not too long ago, and she always told me, "Boy, all I want you to do is pass high school." So that's what I'ma do. I'ma do it for her and me 'cause I wanna be somebody in life, not just a thug ninja, feel me, someone that's on top of his shhh, ya dig. But still have some thug in 'em. Ha, ha, ha.

-Young Heat, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you follow through on the promise you're making to your mom (and to yourself), then you're going to understand why it was so important to her that you pass high school. She's lived longer than you, and she understands how the world works better than you. We know you can make her happy by graduating high school, and we also know that if you do, it will change your life. (You can draw on your thug life to write school papers and educate people.)

Always Remembered

I have just found out that Michael Orozco has passed away. His artwork was amazing and inspirational. I sat in my cell for hours and stared at each intricate pencil stroke.

I never knew somebody could make something so beautiful. I don't really look forward to The Beat anymore, now that "Michelangelo" has departed.

I cherish his pictures and I hope that his family knows he is now in peace even though he is not with us. Thanks for listening Beat. Much love to you Michelangelo.

-AnonymousOne, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We appreciate your words towards this hero, man of heart and such as inspiration. We hope that wherever he is, he finds himself resting in peace. The Beat Within continues living as well as Micheal Orozco continues living in our hearts.

Ghetto Life

Called my cousin, pop ask 'em has he heard the news
Shaniqua died in a drive-by comin' from school"
This ghetto life is sad
She never had a dad
Ask me why she got killed and left in a bag
Who left me here to die
Crime after crime I hustle over stack a grand
They say be a man
But this is where I stand
The ghetto is hard for a good civilian
It's a war to survive nowadays 'cause AK blaze
Every night
Youngstas in the streets havin' gun fights
Is this the life God planned for us?
'Cause if it is man it's real messed up
Every BG on the block we was ready for war
Disrespect our manhood and it was time to go
And them ninjas didn't think before they reacted
They put my cousin six feet deep up in his casket
With his mother at the funeral in the way
I seen too-too many tear drops fall from her face
And it hurts to say my young cousin gone away
But that's the price that you pay when you enter this game
Gangstas, why do you do what you do
It feels like I'm stuck in this broken concrete
Every night I can't sleep
Sweat drippin' out the sheets
My uncle just died
My aunt went blind
My cousin Will got killed in this California life
I been funkin' with these ninjas for months
It feels like I get closer every time I get jumped
I need to sacrifice my life
For my momma and wife
My momma say's money brings problems that I can't deal with
'Cause these mark police I keep a strap on my hip
And a vest on my chest poppin' berg to the max copin' things nothing less
Gangstas-Gangstas why do you do what you do

-Anonymous G, Alameda

From The Beat: Put down the strap, and stick to the rap, time to put the BG life down for a good long nap/cause you've cried too many tears in your young years, fought with too many ghetto fears. Your life is too precious to let it be lost, the gangsta life comes at too high a cost. (And as a writer you deserve more fame, next time you flow for The Beat, sign your name!)

When I'm Away

When away from all my small family members, I think that my big family members tell them that I'm going to be gone for a while. My small family members probably be like "where is he gone to?" Then my big family member makes up some type of lie that is acceptable for them.

Then my little family member says when is he/she going to be back? Then my big family member says he isn't going to be back for a while. Then my little family member says I miss him/her, then they start crying. Then my big family member says it's going to be okay, and they give them a hug and say it's going to be okay.

-Donald, Alameda

From The Beat: How does it make you feel to know that your little family member has to go on with their day without you? How does it make you feel to know you left them out their to fend for themselves in a world where the strong take advantage of the weak? Now, tell us, are you winning in this life's game?

RIP Orozco

Michael Orozco, conoci tu arte. Me parecio lo más bonito que he visto. Me hubiera gustado haberte conocido para aprender más de lo que he aprendido de tu arte. Eras un artista.

Siempre tu arte va a ser recordada. Descanza en paz Michael Orozco. Nos enseñastes que tan solo usando tu imaginación hicistes grandes obras de arte. Que Dios te bendiga en el Reyno de los Cielos.

Gracias por tantas cosas tumbados. Te recordaremos porque tu nos comprendistes en los momentos que nosotros estabamos encerrados. Cuando estabamos en soledad, tú nos comprendistes lo que es estar encerrado, aún pasando todo tu tiempo encerrado. Sé que nos comprendistes demaciado.

From The Beat: La verdad es que esta persona se merece un gran respeto por su telanto y dedicación que nos dió a todos. Aprendimos muchos de él. Esperamos que descance en paz en el lugar donde tú lo has dicho. Gracias por tu tiempo. ¿Dinos, tienes algún talento como el de él, o algo parecido?

RIP Orozco

Michael Orozco, I've seen your art. I think it is the most beautiful thing I've seen. I wish I had met you to lean more from our art. You are a great artist.

You will always be remembered. Rest in peace, Michael Orozco. You taught us that by using the imagination you created good art. God bless you in the kingdom of the sky.

Thanks for your sick art. We will remember you because you understood us in the moment when we were locked up. When we were in loneliness, you understood what it was to be locked up even when you were locked up as well.

-Ricardo, San Francisco

From The Beat: Truth is that this person deserves this respect because of his talent and dedication he gave us. We did lean a lot from him. We hope he rests in peace like you wish. Thanks for your time. Do you any talen like his or anything else?

Loss, Revenge

When I lost my loved one in a gang war I was devastated. I was locked up when I heard the news. I felt trapped because I wanted to take revenge so badly but I couldn't 'cause I was locked up.

When I got out I went to take my revenge on my enemy. I got the straps ready and told my patna to pick me up. We had a full clip fo' the enemy. So here we go... into they hood. We see a couple of them in a car so we start speeding up on them and I start shooting. They tried to get away but we was on their tails. I let a couple of rounds loose and then they get away.

Me and my patna knew police was gonna be around the area any minute now but we didn't care. All that was in my mind was revenge. So we kept cruisin' and they hood 'till we see a familiar enemy car. We pull up next to it and I let my shhh loose. That shhh was fun. We sped off back to my hood. After I got back I was kind of relieved but still I knew that shooting or killing one of them wouldn't bring my cousin back.

Revenge was taught to me by my older heads. I was taught to attack no matter what. And me, I will never forgive or forget what they did to my cousin. I'ma do what I gotta do fo' my cousin. I'ma let shhh loose.

-Anonymous County

From The Beat: Revenge isn't worth it – that's not what you want. All it means is one more funeral, one more suffering mother, and finally one more chance you ending up strapped behind bars. We're telling you straight up, just cause the older heads are older doesn't mean they're wiser!

Our Golden State

It's taking a long time.

This world seems so bleak, so vague to me. Why would this system, this line of institutions, that I have only begun to be a part of, arrest, capture, imprison, incarcerate, destroy, and murder... So many lives, to the point where it is the only country putting so much money into destroying its citizens lives... The only country that has built this many "correctional" facilities, to hold its own citizens?

But on a more precise note, why is our "Golden State" doing so many budget cuts to parks, libraries, medical technicians, firefighters, schools, and actual society supporting associations, while correctional facilities are receiving a raise at the same moment? But yet, the only budget cuts that were made to these facilities were towards the correctional and other programs that helped the inmates have a chance of succeeding upon their release.

The system is truly manufactured so one cannot escape from or graduate from.

-Bakgwai, San Francisco

From The Beat: The system — and all the people who depend on it for their livelihoods — gets stronger and bigger the more people that come into it. The individual's failure is the system's success. Just last week, there was a front-page article in The New York Times. The headline was: "Inmate Count in U.S. Dwarfs Other Nations." The first paragraph read: "The United States has less than 5 percent of the world's population. But it has almost a quarter of the world's prisoners." But don't fall for the line that you cannot escape the trap. You can and you must! You have too much to teach the world about this abomination to allow it to consume you. Success is the best revenge!

The Devil's Playground

Look into the eyes of a killer
Needle deep within his veins
Got his mente going insane
Corazon cold like a dead man's blanket
Wicked thoughts and wicked dreams
Got his mente high off hatred
Never trust a soul that's not my own
'Cause the wind of death can dismantle
Even the hardest vato's skull
He's from the sickest calles
Straight up in desmadre
Where snitches get more than a stitch
I'm talkin' 'bout a one-way ticket
To a six foot ditch
It's a wrap, little homie creepin'
Like rat-ta-tat-tat
Bullet clothes in your gangster clothes
Simon the victim never got hold
The eagle has landed
But it's landed on death
Lil' homie got caught
25 to life. he think not
Found dead in his cell
Left a note for a victim
Said he'll see him in hell
Just another day on the devil's playground
Alrato

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you see things as clearly as you do, if you're able to express what you see as clearly as you are, if you know the way the story ends as you do — the mystery is why you're still playing the game. Is it possible for you to find a different playground, when where you regain control of your own destiny?

When You're Away

What's up with The Beat? This that ninja Mike writing out the unit all the real ninjas in. I'ma write on this topic that caught my attention this week.

When I come to the halls, I leave a lot of people behind. Everybody I leave behind know where I'm at except my youngest brother. He only five years old; he won't understand.

My mom tell him that I'm at school. When I talk to him he always ask me when I'm coming home. It hurts me to tell him I don't know. He tells me how much he miss me and can't wait for me to come home.

I'm about to stop coming to this place. I'm getting tired of hurting my loved ones. Well, that's all I got to say now.

To my brahs in the other units, keep y'all head up. We all we got.

-Mike, San Francisco

From The Beat: Tell us what you mean when you say you're "about to stop coming to this place." Does that mean you've made some decisions about changes in your life, or that you're about to make those decisions. We don't see any reason to wait because we know for sure that, whether you're all you got or not, you are all your little brother got. Think of what he needs to guide him along a path that takes him through school and away from places like this, and then do what's best for him (and you).

Life Through My Eyes

Come take a journey with me. The situation I'm facing – it's a blur. Many cry because loved ones are now under the dirt. Is there a heaven or a hell? Don't ever doubt it.

When you're on the outs it's like heaven, but when you're living life in a jail cell, it sure is hell. We don't see life as it is. We see life through our own window.

I made my son, who has my name, a fatherless seed. It's as if I've fallen into a bush of thistles. Now, I'm always stuck in the middle. When I was a kid I used to have a blast. Now that's all in my past. I'm a man on my own with my heart hard as a stone. I'm the system's servant, living in a concrete room. At least I have a roof.

-Oscar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Fine writing Oscar. We encourage you to continue to express yourself this way. Though you are young, you never know - there might be a book hiding in you somewhere. You've experienced things that many folks will never imagine. You can help us to understand not just your life, but the lives of way too many young people. If you're going to become a writer, you'll need to become a voracious reader. And perhaps you should start with the dictionary. Learn five words a day. Words are all we have to tell the world who we are and why we've done what we've done and what we'd like, still, to do.

It's Better To Stay Out Of Here

When I'm away from my friends and family, at first sight my family is surprised that I'm in here and my friends are worried of when I'm coming back. When I'm gone from my house and people ask my loved ones where I'm at, it's hard for them to say I messed up and I'm in YGC. It's not a thing your parents would like to brag about, so pretty much it's good just to stay out of here.

Plus if you're in here, you can't be at home to protect your loved ones like you would want to do. And you wouldn't know if something important would pop up, and if it did how would you be able to do something about it? Truthfully, you can't, being in here.

Last but not least, if you have a younger family member that lives in your household, think about them. They look up to you whether you like it or not because it's true. They going to grow up trying to do what you do, so be a good example to them by not coming here.

-Reese, San Francisco

From The Beat: You're so right, Reese. Why weren't you able to follow this excellent advice before you did whatever it was that brought you here? Will you be able to live by these principles when you touch down? We hope so, because if you have a younger brother or sister, you're going to be the model they follow.

Too Much

I finally dropped some tears for my grandma Esther May
It was so painful just to see her pretty face
I looked at the obituary and then I instantly start to cry
Lord Jesus why my grandma had to die
She lived a blissful life yeah 70 years old
But now I'm stressed 'cause she really had to go
And on top of that man I got some more stress
Two baby mamas ain't gonna never get enough
One baby mama cool, the other one wild
Every time she write me man I'm getting cussed out
Da last letter hurt me man she said some foul shhh
She put a hole in my heart said I would never see my kid
I got to da point where I'm like fahgit that chick
I can't say F my son but yea F that chick
I can't deal with this stress it's just too much drama
I call myself a man but I wanna cry to my mama
And my stupid ass brotha just runnin' the streets
He didn't even go to the funeral for our only granny
He hittin' big licks and he stay with a gun
I don't wanna lose my brotha 'cause that's the only one
I try to talk to him but he don't listen sometimes
Probably 'cause I'm the younger brother but more sense in my mind.

-Lil' Hell, Alameda

From The Beat: We hear the pain in this, but also the strength. You've done really well in here, you've done great work, great writing, and now it's just a question of whether you can maintain that positivity and get a legit job and put yourself on the path to higher education: For your kids, for your grandma, for your brother, but mostly for yourself!

Wake Me When I'm Free

Please wake me
When I'm free
'Cause I cannot bear captivity
Where I'm told my culture holds no significance
I wither and die in ignorance
But my inner eye can see a race
Who reigned as kings
In another place
The green trees rich and full
And every man spoke of beautiful
Men and woman as equals
War was gone 'cause all
Was peaceful
But then like a nightmare
I wake up to see that
I'm a prisoner at Juvy
I cannot bear captivity
I'd rather be stricken blind
Than to be without the free will of a mind

-Momo, Alameda

From The Beat: The freedom you seek is mental first, if you have a dream to follow you can get through the worst, keep your eyes in the prize, you can't change the past, but through positive eyes you can make changes that last.

Il my life I would see or hear my family or friends get arrested time and time again. I've seen my grandma cry about it.

As a Youngsta

When I was little, my dad and my big brother would always get arrested. My grandma would always tell me they went on vacation, but I usually found out that they got arrested. When they were out, they would always be in the streets, so I never really saw them that much. And if they were home, they would be asleep. I've seen my dad get arrested before. Sometimes I didn't recognize them when they got released. I can recall one time when my dad got arrested I was shocked, it happened so quick. I was sad because he was in the patty-wagon.

All my life I would see or hear my family or friends get arrested time and time again. I've seen my grandma cry about it.

I always said I wasn't gonna end up like my dad and brother. But now I'm in Juvenile Hall. I didn't want to put my grandma in this stress. But I gotta face my consequence. And when I get out, I'll be able to be home with my family and spend time with my loved ones. I can't wait until I get out.

-Ruben

From The Beat: That's what this life is about, being there for your love ones like you'll like for them to be there for you. Being in jail is being there for no one. It's the most lonely, depressing place. If you wish to see change in your life you first have to tell yourself no!

In My Life

In my life I made some mistakes that I wish I never made
My dad died when I was four, now it's too late
I already made the mistake
I'm gonna keep my head up till my time is up, never give up ninja
Like I'm gonna have to split, don't trip
At least he saved a girl life, what a real ninja never did
He was on a jet-ski and he seen a girl drowning in the water and saved her
He threw his life jacket (for her) but he knew he couldn't swim but still threw it
Come to find out he's dead and in my head I'm thinking, but instead
I was only four I didn't have no head
She lived to this day
She ain't dead
But I gotta mama, and she is my dad
But my potnas I tried to tell
"Yea" that's what I said
But to this day I wish I had my dad.
I love you.

-Lil' Co, Alameda

From The Beat: You should be very proud of your dad. What your dad did takes a lot of heart and courage. And you're right not many so-called real ninjas can say that they saved someone's life, let it alone their own. Heart and courage is in your blood young homie. Use it for something positive. Follow your pops lead. He was a great man, and you are great young man also. Stay away from the negativity it's not gonna get you anywhere. Be positive and maybe you can help save young lives also.

Did You Plan That

When you wake up from your sleep and you start your day you tell me if you start the day right if you do that's all I got to say. But guess what that's not how you start your day.

(did you plan that?)
For example have you ever woke up one morning with a smile on your face looking at sky say god what a good day. Have you ever walked into the kitchen and you know a good morning meal coming your way. A good family to eat it with and joke and play.

(did you plan that)
Have you ever walked your sister to school when you was told not to. Worrying about her safety and not you. Getting to school late and sometimes early picking her up after school 'cause you get out early.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever been accused of something you never did and for the people that hangs in your crew. But what if your crew's not bad y'all just goofy and play a lot but still being accused 'cause your clothes drag or by the color of skin people think you do sin.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever went to some parties came late and got in trouble and got mad at every but you made the mistake. Not let one get serious if you want me to stop just let me know and I will some of this stuff even brought me to tears.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever got so hooked on girls that you made a game out of it getting numbers getting kisses 'cause your friend made a bet. Sneaking girls home or going to their houses come home late sneaking like a mouse.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever went to a library to look at your myspace and seen your mom there and y'all talking face to face. Y'all leave the library at the same time think you'll see her when you get home at a certain time.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever walked to the bus stop after saying bye to your mom she say there's the police but you stay calm. You walk right past not saying a word but they grab your arm and pull you to the curb. You didn't do nothing wrong. They say they got a warrant for your arrest as you see your mom go home. They cuff you and put you in a car and now you got God to talk to.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever been downtown sitting hours in a room waiting to be interviewed? They ask you question after question on stuff you did not do for making you stutter like you do dro'. They say you here for a robbery for a PSE and thought come to your mind and you remember that scene. Now for those of y'all that like a PSP what, let me give y'all a flash back of that scene. I was on the bus on my way home I see kids talk and be on they phone's and my friend's tell me they found my PSP. First mistake I did was listen to they plea 'cause the first thing I did was want to go see. It was at library on Rockridge and I see a kid and that he has a PSP. I ask can I see he lets me see I put it in my pocket and I said if you want it fight me for it so it took him a while but he did.

(did you plan that)
Have you ever been told you can go home just call your mom and as soon as they leave a white cop come take your finger print your pic… put in the computer to juvenile hall please. You get made a question he say where do think you're going lil' boy you say home they say you can't go home. He's not trying to listen he's not letting you use the phone.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever came to the hall sat in a cell and thought the rest of your life would be hell. Have you been in the hall for a month without one visit, or one letter telling yourself every day you got to pull it together.

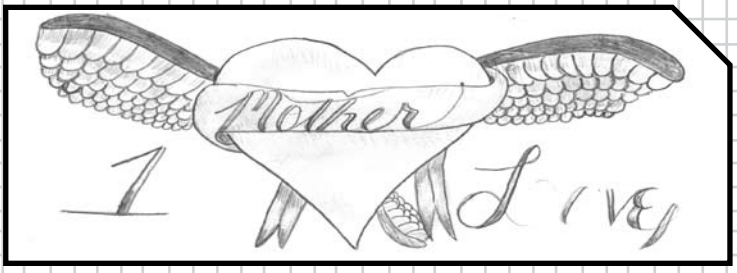
(did you plan that?)
Have you ever went to court like three or four times the judge gives you a release but your mom never makes it on time. Asking the staff for help but they can't do nothing waiting for your next court date thinking your mom might not be coming.

(did you plan that?)
Have you ever had a time limit to talk to your own mom. To sit in your cell and speak to God and cry knowing God knows everything so you can't lie.
Have you planned on coming to jail?
Have you planned on making your life a living hell?
Have you planned on being away from your family?
I share this with you not because it rhymes.
I share this with you not because I got the time.
I share this with you 'cause jail ain't the place to be
It's more to it than what's on TV
So don't wait too long to have God in your life. Don't wait to go to jail to think on what's right.
Because the only way it's not right is if you fight Jesus-Christ.
(did you plan that)
You can't plan your life …Only God can. Remember that.

(did you plan that.)

-Lil' Josh, Alameda

From The Beat: There is so much insight and wisdom in this poem that it's hard to even know where to start to appreciate what you've put forth. This is a great poem. They say "A failure to plan is a plan to fail." Do you believe this is true? And even if "only God can plan" as you suggest at the end, are there things you can do to help him along the way.



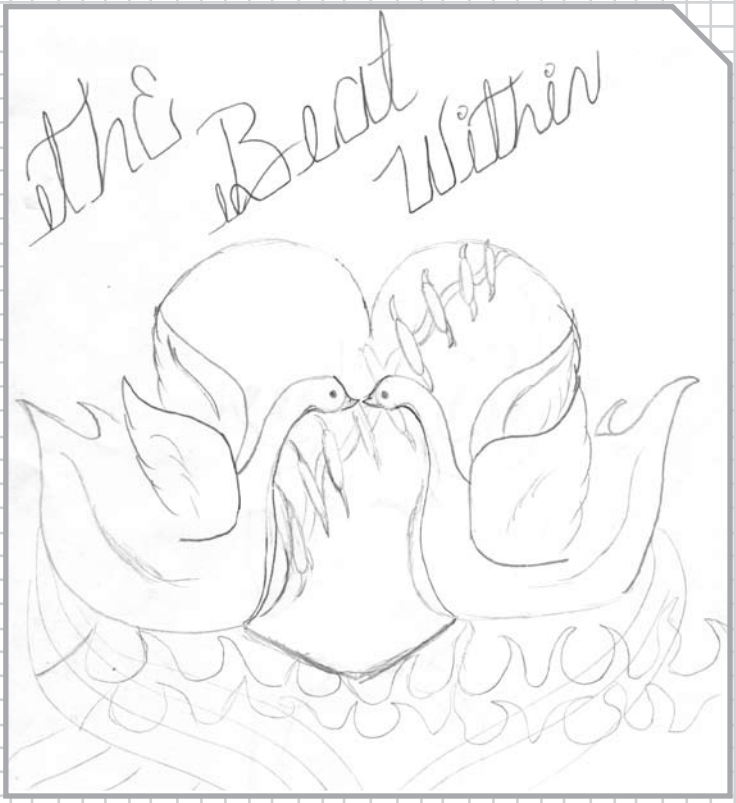
Have you planned on coming to jail?
Have you planned on making your life a living hell?
Have you planned on being away from your family?

Little By Little

I'm dying little by little inside.
My heart is aching and things are getting worse, little by little.
I'm going to placement soon and I won't get to talk to my sister, Delaney, until I come home.
My mom doesn't want me talking to her
because she says it hurts my sister
too much to talk to me and then not see me.
My sister and I are really close.
I raised my sister.
She's nothing short of my everything, and it's killing me not to hear her voice.
I can't talk to her for another year and it's killing me little by little…

-Angel, Marin

From The Beat: What can you say to your mom to convince her that it's breaking your heart not to be able to talk to your little sister? Can you tell your mom that unless you can call your sister, she will think you've fallen off the earth or died, and that that's too cruel for you all? Maybe your mom is trying to punish you by denying you the right to talk to your baby sister. Can you write to your sister, at least for now?



Losing One

If they told me that I had to lose one of my five senses I think it would be my taste.
I'll still have my eyes to see the beauty.
My ears to hear the birds chirp in the morning.
Smell to smell the perfume on a lovely girl.
Last, the touch to feel the tender skin of my newborn babies.
So taste really doesn't help me with anything. But that's only my opinion.
That's it for today. Peace.

-Lil' M, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This piece is beautiful, filled with excellent imagery. When a person has the talent to implant images into his reader's head, he should keep writing. Just from these few sentences, we can tell what you value in life—family and nature, especially.

I Am A Dad!

What's cracking Beat readers, and Beat Within people? It's me that one and only Chicano named Nemo. I want to start this off by saying that I've been cool. I also want to let you know that I'm going to the Ranch.

Well, Monday was the best day of my life because my baby girl was born. She came to this world weighing almost seven pounds.

I wasn't able to be there when she was born and that made me hella sad because I wanted to experience her birth, but my PO gave me an OT to see her the day after.

When I saw her for the first time, I felt like crying, but for some reason I couldn't. When I looked at her I felt like I was looking into the mirror because my daughter hella looks like me.

Well, I get to see my princess tomorrow because I'm getting a special visit. Well this is all for now, 'till paper and pencil meet again. To all – stay strong. This Chicano is out! Alrato.

-Nemo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're all so happy to hear about the birth of your daughter. Every new human life is so precious. We hope that you'll have a great relationship with her and her mom. Drop us a note sometime to let us now how the family's doing!

Somethin' Special

Bein' with or around you
Puts me in a no worry don't care type of mood
Which is somethin' that doesn't happen very often
But ever since we've been together
I'm in a more positive manner
I look and see things a whole lot different
'Cause I've changed up my circle from negative to positive
All because of you
Somethin' Special
Now I'm back at home thought I was left all alone
But found out I had you next to me
Not movin' a muscle open arms ready for me to come
Layin' 'em on my team
'Cause with you I'm always winning, long as you stay with me
Somethin' Special
Bein' away for so long then comin' home to a cute smile
And a lil' bubble on the side makes me say why
Sometime I feel like cryin 'cause without you I'm dyin'
And my real ninjas no I ain't lyin'
with us bein' together makes me feel like I'm flyin'
through clouds Aliyah In the background playin' hella loud
Somethin' special
Me havin' somebody like you in my life
Makes me ask myself
What's the point of growin' up and tryna get a wife
When I got a princess right here in front of me
Stayin' true faithfully
Givin' me what I want
Just because I'm her baby and she loves to lay next to me
I really can't stand to be away longer than a day
But I can't help but wait
'cause all that BS they talking doesn't come to my knee
I'm like a linebacker don't run it by me
when it comes to my baby—
… 'cause she my somethin' special.

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: Keep fighting to stay and act worthy of the "something special" you've found. We hope that the power of love (any love) helps keep you focused on the positive changes you are trying to make.

One-Way Ticket

Me, if somebody give me a one-way ticket, I will go somewhere with some females. You know me, all I need is that one ticket, and I'm up and out of all this beef shhh. What I have noticed is that I got to live for my baby, because I can't see the next brother taking care of my seed.

This is the stuff that just I sit here and think about and reflect on, all the stuff I did in the past — all the shhh I did in the past — and what I really want to change in my life. This jail shhh just drives a brother crazy in here. Sometimes I think I'm losin' my mind.

-T- Gunn, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're sorry you feel like you're losing your mind. Can you describe exactly what you're experiencing when you feel that way? When you think about the things you have to change (if you want to change the consequences), what kind of plan do you come up with? That word "plan" is the most important word in that question, because if you don't plan, you're letting someone else plan for you. We understand that you don't want another man to provide for your child, but if you can't keep yourself out of the system, then you're giving up on your responsibility. We know you can do it, but only you know if you will.

Love Is Pain, Yet Always Wanted

It's been over eight months and it still brings me tears
I was so in love the day you walked away
And it hurts inside every night when I pray
Yet I hold my head up high, up toward the sky
Hiding all the pain and misery behind
But what can I do when all my dreams are shattered?
Pray to the lord that everything gets better?
How can I pray when my hearts been beat?
The heart-filled tears of a man's defeat
So you're a torn lover, from another mother
But no matter what happens, it will never be over
Try and push me away 'cause this love will last
Forever and ever until my heart comes back
I'm begging you please, just let it go
My heart can't take the power you hold
I took too many chances to hold you close
It took me to a world, specialized from you
So now I'm dragged away from the truth

-Ly, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: Nobody's love poems move us like yours do, Ly. They are filled with such longing and loss. The only thing we can add is something you already know, which is that some consequences go on forever...

My Trip

One place I would like to go is my future. I would like to see if I would be dead in prison or doing good. Or probably just being the same.

I know I wont be a drug addict, that's for sure. Most likely I think I would be in prison. I'm not tryna make myself sound all hard and crazy, or nothing like. That's just what I expect. I think all gang-affiliated members should expect if you're doing what you're supposed to do.

I hope I'm not dead. It would suck to lose your life to an enemy. Well, I'ma go now, so later. 'Til next week.

-Cisco, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: We admire the imagination and creativity that allowed you to want to visit your future. But it makes us sad to think that you believe it will be in prison because you're doing "what you're supposed to do" as a gang member. If you could see yourself in the future, and you were in prison, would that change anything about the choices you're making now? What do you think prison life is like, and why would you do those things which you believe will lead you there? As for losing your life to "an enemy," yeah, that would suck. But then, losing your life at all sucks, as far as we're concerned.

When I Was Away

When I was away people asked for me
They said I was locked up like a true g
I was scared when I came in but now I'm not
Everywhere I go I wanted to be fought
Angry like a bull and I'll never stop
Never sober always high, but only off pot
A job is what I need, but no one wanted me
I slang, I bang, and don't stop like a train
I'm a fool, for not being true to my girl
But I played my part to the fullest and never been caught
I just wish when I seen you I just never talked
Back to the beat
When I was away
I hustled and smoked all day
Out of here is what I really care
'Cause truly this place is a nightmare

-Wil, Santa Clara

The Beat Within: We had to change your last two lines a little because you ended with a word we don't print in The Beat, and we wanted to keep your rhyme going. You say you'll never stop (which you can't really know, since no one knows the future), but we're wondering why you would want to keep doing what you know leads here, to a cage and strangers controlling your every move. Don't you see the connection between the slangin', bangin', fighting and always staying high, and coming to this place? Why would you want more of the same?

One-Way Ticket

If I could get a good grip of money I would pack up without a good-bye to no one, just jet. I get any type of transportation to like Louisiana and try to start over. Just somewhere full of culture and me just not knowing anybody. See people, different people, and just do me. Start a family with a country boy and just do me and never come back ever.

-Ne'Nee, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're interested in why you chose Louisiana? And what's so special about a country boy?

First Time I Smoked Weed

What's up with The Beat I? It your boy Grimy. Yup, I'm still here waiting till trial date.

But anyway, I'ma talk about the first time I smoked weed. It all started when I was just nine years old. I got peer pressured by the people that I always kicked it with, and that was the people from the block. I always said to my mom that I will never smoke weed or drink, but I just told her a lie.

The first time I took that puff I started to cough my lungs out, but it was the best feeling I ever had. I was laughing, cheesing, hungry and tired. I never had felt that way before, and I told my brother about it. He told me don't ever get caught 'cause when I do, moms was going to be on my ass. But I didn't care.

I just kept on doing it and doing it and finally got caught. But moms didn't get mad. She understood why I was doing it, and it was because I had so much stress in me from things that were really serious. If you knew me more, you would understand why I smoke. It's because of the past. Chea late.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: From our experience — and what we've seen in the halls — we think alcohol is a truly dangerous drug compared to weed. But, at the same time, when you're only nine years old, your body is still developing, including your lungs, your brain and everything else, and we have to believe that the ingredients in weed can only harm that development. But you're all grown now, so you can make your own choices. We hope the difficult past you refer to is in the past, and that your future holds much more promise.

People I Would Hate To Lose

I am writing about the people I would hate to lose in my life. My family is my main thing in my life. I would be so mad to lose them (16 year old brother, 5 year old brother, a very young sister, my mom and dad) because those are the people that will always be there.

My mom is on my mind everyday and all day because she's the one I look out the most for. I love her and she raised me my whole childhood even though she was a drug addict and never really had money to buy me a lot.

My and my brother really appreciated her for everything.

My dad was there sometimes, but only when he wanted to be. Now he tries to be there a lot.

My older brother is my number one homie 'cause he is and will always be there for me. My little sister and brother are like my happiness to hear and see that they are still here in this world. It makes me powerful to see that I have those people that I would hate to loose. If anything I would want my life to go before any of those lives go. I would be mad and sad forever.

-Javier, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You are right, now matter what you do, they do or what, your family will always be there. But, the only piece missing from the FAMILY is you. You presence is needed. Like you've said, your mom and your dad have changed for you and their family. Now it's time you do the same thing. You're the only one missing. You may not lose them, but they might lose you, unless you change your ways. People make mistakes until realizing what they are doing is wrong, and that's when things change. It's time for you to make change!

We're Hungry

What up Beat Within? Today I'm going to write about my life. The only reason why I want to write about my life is because I'm tired of getting locked up.

The only reason why I commit crime is because we're all hungry out there. I'm not only talking about one, I'm talking about everybody in YGC. 70% of people in YGC. is in here for home invasion and robberies.

I want to change my life to something better than this right now. I'm getting tired of robbing people and punk people for their money. My goal is football, something nice to do.

-Hen, San Francisco

From The Beat: We understand how hard it is to put food on the table (and to get things that you like to have, even if you don't need to have). But we also know what you have discovered — that getting your money the fast way is a fast ticket to losing your freedom. And who wants to be in a cage? Nobody! So we hope you follow your dream of playing football — something nice to do — and never forget how much you hate being locked up.

Thinking

I'm sitting in my room
thinking of the game
that gave me this 'fame'.
It's just a big journey
and sometimes I sleep
through it. I'm thinking
about the past. I wish
I was on the outs
so I could feel the wind
and smell my girl's scent
at night. All I can hear
is the rain, and a moving train.

-George, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good poem George. The songs and stories tell us about that lonely sound of the far away train, hauling our dreams through the night. Keep writing. We'd love to read more.

Should've Went Home...

What's up Beat? It's me, Grimy, chilling up in here waiting till the date that they tell me what they are going to do with me. It's either YA or the Ranch... or, if I beat my case by taking this shhh to trial.

They're trying to play me. They have me stressing up in this place. I would say they have my mom stressing, but it doesn't sound right 'cause really I'm the reason why she is stressing.

I should've went home that night. I should've just went to my curfew for the first time, but I chose not to. I wanted to kick it with the homie and do what we had to do that night. But I will never forget about that crazy night, March 1, 2008, 1:00am.

But anyway, I'm sorry to my family for disappointing my family once again. But hat the gangbang life for you.

-Grimy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Well, we hope you don't get sent to the Y, even if you don't beat your case. But we also hope you don't have to spend large periods of time in the future thinking about what you "should've" done or not done. Start doing what you know you have to do in order not to hurt y our family again. Whatever you remember of "that night," you didn't do what you "had to do," you did what you chose to do. You can make different choices.

It's Hard Losing Your Freedom

Living your life locked up is hella hard. You live each day wondering when you're gonna get out, wondering when your next court date is gonna be, hoping someone's gonna come visit you. You sit in your cell all day thinking about your friends, family.

But the thing you think about the most is your freedom. People come and go, in and out of the halls every day that make hella promises that they're gonna change, so the judge lets them out, and they're back a week later.

-Jessie, San Francisco

From The Beat: Yes, losing what defines you — your family, your room, your friends '— is one of the hardest things to endure. There's only one way to avoid it, and that's not to be one of those sad people who promise never to return, but soon do.

RIP Brother Johnny

[Hook]
RIP to my brother Johnny
RIP to my brother Johnny

[Verse 1]
I remember all the things we done when I was young
I know I was only two I remember all the fun
my older sister probably has more memories
but all I gotta say bro is please rest in peace.
I know your watching down from the Heavens above and
making sure that our grandma' is taken care of
I went to the cemetery one day,
I felt a tingle from my head all the way through my legs
and then I thought it started to rain, but then I realized
it was just the tears from my eyes and yes I do cry.

[Hook]

In loving memory of my brother Johnny.

-P-Nut, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is the most beautiful writing we've read this whole day. We are sorry for you, your family, and your brother. Things happen for a reason and you know that. And all we gotta do now is to hope that he is resting in peace. If he was here, what do you think he would say to you?

Puppet Of The Calles

Strings laced with black magic
Lift a finger, it will be something tragic
Wrapped in chains of eternal flames
Not even the devil can control its reins
Possessed by satanic rage
No toy box just a jailhouse cage
A slave to the sick and twisted
Tears of sangre so you know its wicked
A menacing creation from the gates of hell
A fallen angel so nowhere to prevail
It's cuerpo drops down like a one-ton stone
Crazed laughter is the puppet's only tone
Beholder of the eyes that never sleep
And the corazon that never beats
Poisoned with a passion that will never cease
Bite deadly like a snake
Only this one doesn't rattle

-Grumpy, San Francisco

From The Beat: But who is the puppet master? Who is pulling the strings. If the stage is wet with tears and blood, why not choose a different stage?

When You're Away

I do think about what my auntie tells my little cousins when I'm away. My auntie told them that the police took me away because I didn't go to school. My cousins been telling my auntie that they miss me, and keep asking when I'm going to come back.

When I get out, I'm going to just tell them that I stayed at my grandparents' house for the other days till I can go home. I think it's going to be hard to explain to them about where I've been.

Nothing like this has ever happened to me. That's why I think it's going to be hard to explain.

-Arnold, San Francisco

From The Beat: So, this is the first time you've given up your freedom to the system? What have you learned? What has this experience made you want to change when you get out? How will you help your little cousins avoid following in your footsteps that led here?

I'm Gone

I have left the fam.
I have left the school.
I have left all who care 'bout the thug.
This base in this place, boring as hell.
My Grams keep it real with my lil' cousin
Marcellus, and tell him where I am. He look at me
different. I know last time I talk to him, he told me,
"I don't want to talk to you," and dropped the phone.
That's like my lil' bra fa' real.
When I come back, he don't act no different towards me.
He be the same.
As I explain to him what went down,
He don't do nothin' but frown.
But he say I held you down.
Then I frown.
I gotta make my young dude life turn around
Before he end up like me
Bangin' in these streets.
I don't want young do like me.

-Jr, San Francisco

From The Beat: We applaud your efforts to turn your little cousin away from the path you took to get here. Just remember that what you tell him is not as important as what you do. He will model his behavior after your behavior, not after your words. So think about what you want him to do, and then you do it. And think about what you don't want him to do, and don't' do it!

Just say "No"

What's up Beat? Just here to talk about say no to what you don't feel like doing. I mean like if someone ask you if you want to smoke a blunt and it's someone you want to kick it with and be cool with, you don't have to smoke weed if you want to kick it. You can just say "Naw, it's good I ain't tryna smoke."

You patna just gone say it's good -- if that's your real patna. But if it ain't your patna he gonna say "just hit it one time." Just say no and the outcome is gonna come out good because you said what you felt like. Screw everybody else. Just do you and what you feel. Don't be no follower. Be your own person. If you are a follower than follow a good role model.

If you really want to smoke then do what you got to do. I'm telling you that if you smoke, it's gonna make you feel good and all that. But after it starts being a habit, you start wasting all your money on drugs. Then one day you gonna wake up scavenging for money to get your next high. That's what I gotta say.

-Linh, Alameda

From The Beat: The thing that makes us know you're for real on this is that you're not just talking – you've been through it and suffered from it, so you know what it's like to have drugs take over your life, and even your dignity. Easier said than done though, right? Do you think this struggle is over for you, or is it still a part of your life?

Reward

A reward, with the wind relaxing and the sunset,
with no fear in the city, and holding your hand.
It's a blessing to be next to you and your beautiful eyes.
Time passes and the night rises. It's me, your servant,
with no words to explain my love.

-Wedo, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautiful poem. Very beautiful.

When I'm away

Hell yeah, man, when I'm away my baby's ma gotta tell my son hella lies about where I'm at. And she can't come to my court dates because my other lil' baby mom be there.

I hope I get out, though, because this 'when I'm away' shhh ain't cool. So if I had a one-way ticket anywhere, it would be to my son's house because I ain't tryna have my lil' ninja like me.

-Rich, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate your desire to protect your son, even if you have to tell lies to do it. But the fact that you already have two children by two different females does not speak highly of your sense of responsibility. Anyone can make a baby. But being a father requires so much more! We know you plan some changes in your life, and now we know how important those changes are, and not just for you!

When You're Away

What up with The Beat? Man, a ninja still up in this hole waiting to get out so I could touch down, man, fo' real, yo. To all you jailhouse ninjas, I don't know what to say. As a matter of fact, stop coming to this shady-ass place.

You missin' a lot, man, fo' real. You ain't getting no sex and you away from yo' fam. Man, you really missin' a lot when you go away.

We let these people tell us when we eat, sleep, come out and chill, when we can see our family. That's hella shhh, man. Ninjas missin' a lot when we away…

-Bb, San Francisco

From The Beat: We assume that every time you write the words "you" and "we" it includes "I." In other words, everything you say hits the nail on the head, and it applies equally to you as to everyone else handing away their freedom. (We decided to leave Mike's ass out of it…)

Think About a New Grind

All my people out there doing hard time, feel vindictive
about people who told on the crime.
One day you will be home you might be grown.
At this time we all should think about a new grind.
Our mind is too powerful to not be prosperous.
The system known as Babylon has us locked up
I wonder do guys like wearing cuffs.
We all want to be free
This life is not good can't you see
You might get whacked off some faulty ass beef,
Makin' too many enemies in the streets.
I don't think nobody planned to be here
But I had a dream of something similar
And could not stop it from coming true..
Can't y'all see what I'm goin through,
But I'm too messed up to boo-hoo.

-Ice-Mayne, Alameda

From The Beat: You messed up, what you say is true, but that doesn't mean it's too late for you, you know the price for playing the game, you could find other ways to make your name, be the one who breaks out of the hood, turns the situation from bad to good, start with a program, a mentor, and school – your brain is too sharp to let you play the fool.

One-Way Ticket To Where?

What's good with The Beat, man. This the Skip, ninja. I'm hopefully on ma way outta here, which leads me to my topic for this week.

If someone gave me a one-way ticket to go somewhere on the bus, I would choose... nowhere. I would not accept the ticket. Instead I would give it to someone less fortunate than myself because even though I am incarcerated, I still have a gift on the outs. Plus, I hate the bus. I couldn't ride it for too long.

I couldn't leave my family and friends. Everyone I know is here. I know it's a lot of beautiful of places in the world, but some one else needs the ticket more than I...

I'm ghost.

-Lil' Skippa, San Francisco

From The Beat: Even though we think travel enriches the soul, we also love the fact that your rich soul already wants to do good for others. That's a wonderful quality. Maybe one day, you'll be able to take all your family and friends to a destination of your choice, just to see another way of living. You have a good heart and a good mind. With those two "gifts," you should be able to keep yourself out of here, and just move forward with your life.

God's Blessing

I thank God with every day I'm blessed with,
every day of sobriety with no drugs and no fifths.
I wanna live a good life but it takes time and dedication,
Tryin' to relieve my stress so I wait for Monday night meditation.
It's a struggle day-to-day just bein' me and livin',
Even though I do bad I know that I will be forgiven.
To relieve my stress I read books and write in The Beat,
Crazy thoughts run through my mind at night I can't even sleep.
In two weeks I'm leaving this place and I'm back to the streets.
But before I go I would like to thank The Beat.
Life is good and bad – full of happiness and depression.
But no matter what happens in Life,
If you live right in the end....you will receive God's blessing.

-Man With P-Trees, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for the words of this wonderful poem. Now you're entering into the next phase of your life, which is putting those words into action. Drop us a line and let us know what happens in part 2!

My Baby Momma And My Future Baby

What's up Beat? This yo' boy BJ. Yeah, I'm back, I know. I came back over some stupid things that I should have never done.

But anyway, my baby momma is out there on them streets with my baby in her stomach. She is three months. When I came back to jail, I was scared that I would lose her love once again. I didn't mean for me to come back. I really did not plan on coming back here.

She is very mad that I came back here for something more serious. I was out for only three months, and now I'm back. I love her so much I would do anything to take back all the things that I did to make her mad, sad, scared, and worried. I hope that I still have all of her love that she had for me when I was at the house with her and my baby.

Baby, I know that you ain't gon' never see this, but I love you, always and forever. You are always on my mind and my heart. I miss you...

-Bj, San Francisco

From The Beat: You say you didn't plan to come back here, but who does plan to come here? Nobody! You have to do better than that. You have to plan not to come back, and by that, we mean you have to make a real plan, with steps to follow. You know what you want in relation to your baby's momma and your baby, so write it on paper, and then write the plan to achieve it. Then keep your promise. Telling her you love her is much less important than showing her you love her, by not doing the things that separate you from her.

One-Way Ticket

If someone was to buy me a one-way ticket, I would want to go to Georgia because it's down South, out of Cali, with a new identity, with different types of females. I chose this destination for a new life, like I was reborn.

I hope to see new things, clothes, females, cars, food and see how fast the money comes. I hope to become a leader. Yes I dream about going away.

-Lil' Bra, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you get to see this dream of travel come true, whether it takes you to Georgia or to other places. It's always good to see how others live. Of course, we think you're going to find that females are females, wherever they live, and that money comes as fast or slow as you make it come. If you cut corners, it may come fast, but it won't last long.

Free

I hear birds singing in trees
I hear God say you're finally free;
They try to blind me but I still see;
They push me away from the light so I can't be free;
I'm searching and I find the lock door
I turn the knob and now I'm out the heart of the war.
I think to myself and say what I can be;
So as I sleep and dream and when I wake up I see we're all free;
As I dig in my pocket and pull the skeleton key;
I look at the world and yell let us be free.
I can listen close and here a honey be lots of people can laugh and play and say I am happy to be free;
But when you be behind a lock door
Tell how would you be;
But I'm having that experience and all
I dream and think about is when you and me
Are we ever going to be free.
That's all I want is to be free!

-Lil' Boogie, Alameda

From The Beat: You will be free soon – and we hope you find all the freedom you describe in this poem, with the laughter and happiness that you hope for and deserve.

I Am Going To Write About My Family

The first person I'm talking about is my mom. My mom is my best friend. She is my everything. If it wasn't for her, I wouldn't be here. She made me who I am today. My mom really is strong. She have six kids and she a single mother.

My boyfriend is my everything too. He make me smile every day. He and my mom is my heart, beside my lil' brothers and sisters. I have little sisters and one little brother. That all I really got, my mom, bro, sis, boyfriend.

My life go by daily. It kinda crazy. But the truth, jail really made me sit back and think. It made me really change, look at the hook, at the world.

-Kevina, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's good to appreciate all that your mother has done for you. And it's better if that appreciating leads you to doing the things you know you have to do to make your mom happy — and that means stop doing the things that let the system take you away from her! Do you love her that much?

A Goon Loves His Mom

I'm a goon, but to my mom, I'm still a baby. She raised a ninja by herself. You hall of lady. I know this shhh I'm doin' don't got nothin' to do with how you raised me. This shhh killing me to know I'm running my mama crazy.

This going out to all the real ninjas in the world. We don't know what we running our mommas through when she's calling, when she comes out looking for us, all the shhh, man.

Yo' mom is not going to be here forever. They got to go some day. Man, I know a lot of ninjas love they moms but who look after yo' momma when a ninja in here? What if a ninja hit yo' home when you in here? Every time a ninja get locked up, yo' mom told you come in. When a ninja get smacked, what yo' mom going to do? Pay for yo' funeral? Man, it is life, but I'm true to the game.

-Pookie, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate almost every word of this thoughtful piece about what your mothers mean to y'all, and how what you're doing puts them through a ringer and squeezes them dry. But then at the end, you switch up and proclaim your loyalty to the game. How is it possible to be loyal to the game without putting your mother through the very pain and anguish you describe so well here? Have you ever heard the expression, "You can't have your cake and eat it too?" That seems to be what you're hoping for — love for the game and love for your mom. But in truth, there comes a time — after childhood — when adults are called on to make adult choices. That time has come for you.

Growing Up

Growing up was hard on my block
It was bullies out there so you went and got the glock
Needed money so you started sellin' rocks
Used to hide your whole bundle up in your socks
Loved the streets and you loved your block
Posted out there until you got shot
Out the hospital now back to the block
Then you caught your first case
Tried to rob a dude, someone put the thang in his face
Got caught tried to get away in a foot chase
Tried to say it was racist
But you was scared to do time face it
Just keep it solid
'Cause I know 'cause I been robbin' people
Takin' everything but yo' bus pass and wallet

-Lil' T The Freestyle King, Alameda

From The Beat: Another great poem, Lil T. You get better by the week! Keep dropping knowledge the way you feel it and see it.

Trying To Get Out And Stay Out

What's good with The Beat? Me, I'm just trying to live life day by day, and I'm trying to get out of this place. You know I should be getting out soon, but I don't even know when I'm getting out.

I got a job waiting for me and I go to this little business class. I get paid $80 a month, and when I came in here, I came for a little stupid thing. but it ain't about what I did. I just wanted to let you know.

But when I get out, I'm really going to stay out of here fo' real, man. Next time I come, I'm going to a group home or YA or something. That's what they said.

When I get out, I'm going to be getting paid $350 from the job and $80 from the business class, so I'm cool. But I just need to stay out of trouble fo' real, because this system will really mess you up, man, fo' real.

Just slow down man because the DA trying to really play people out, man, fo' real. And you don't want to get sent off somewhere far, far away from yo' fam bam.

Peace out and take this shhh serious, man, fo' real. Peace yo.

-Deontae, San Francisco

From The Beat: We took out the sentence that describes what you did to get here because, first, it could get you in deeper trouble and second, we don't think what you did is such a "little stupid thing..." But we're more interested in what you plan to do than what got you here, and your plans sound excellent. Take your own advice, and follow through with your training and job. That's your ticket away from lock-up.

Time Starts Now

How many time am going to stop
while my life keeps on passing my by
Broken promises to my family;
still waiting with tears in their eyes,
A job, school,
how could you be stupid enough to be so bad
when you were doin' so good,
Always thinking about what I can come up on fast,
instead of my responsibilities liked I should,
Now I'm back trapped,
lost in the darkness, a place I never want to be,
Away from my family friends and loved ones
but yet no one's to blame but me!
So what do I do now?
Quit, lay down and throw in the towel?
Or do I keep going and fighting back, and make a better choices,
If so time starts now....

-Lil' Chris, Alameda

From The Beat: Great poem, brimming with determination and conviction. If time starts now, like you say, then what are the first changes you are going to have to make? Different friends? New habits? New programs?

I Love Life

It's my first day up in YGC. I hate it. If I could, I would take it back, the first hit, the first word I said to her. It messed up my life.

Got my Tia at home stressin', my man at home trippin' 'cause he ain't never gonna see his baby girl again. But I'ma get out.

I'm a nice girl. They gotta let me out. I pray I get out. I'll do all my stuff, go to school, work, anything. I love me, my body, my life, I love LIFE. I love my man.

-Angel P

From The Beat: Of course they will let you out of here. But the real question is what you're going to do once you walk away from this place. What will you change to show all that love of life and keep it moving forward?

Daddy's Gone

It's been long but Daddy's gone
For all the wrong
It's so sad but it's so true
I could be a thousand miles away but I'll never leave you
I know your two
But I'ma list the s**t you cant go do
It's hard to win but even harder to lose
You're my boy your mama's my boo
Daddy loves you and he gets caught up
This is just some shhh I thought of
But it's my opinion
That all women
Love attention
And not to mention daily collisions
Its crazy baby you shady
Lately I been craving what we do to make babys
Its crazy how I could love you so much
You the only boy I trust
I love you miss you and need you
When I flow I just need a beat foo'.

-Noey, Alameda

From The Beat: Another great flow, Noey, your talent is undeniable. When we read through this though, the mindset you're stuck in is undeniable too. We had to cut some negative sections out of this poem. Out of love for your son and yourself, we hope you cut that negative from your life too...

Hatin'

Growin' up is hard
Walk late night in the dark
Ninjas running up talking 'bout come out yo' pockets
Jack you in your right eye socket
Take your money and leave you on the ground
Jump up and you lookin' all around
They ain't nowhere to be found
Walkin' home sad
Cryin' 'cause you so mad
When you see him you gon' run up and sleeped 'em
Take everything 'cause you just stripped 'em
It's a hard life
But live right 'cause one day you gon' die

-Go Diego Go, Alameda

From The Beat: Is this the way it was for you growing up in the streets? Or are you describing things you've seen? Have you been the victim of this kind of thing before? Or have you been on the victimizer's side?

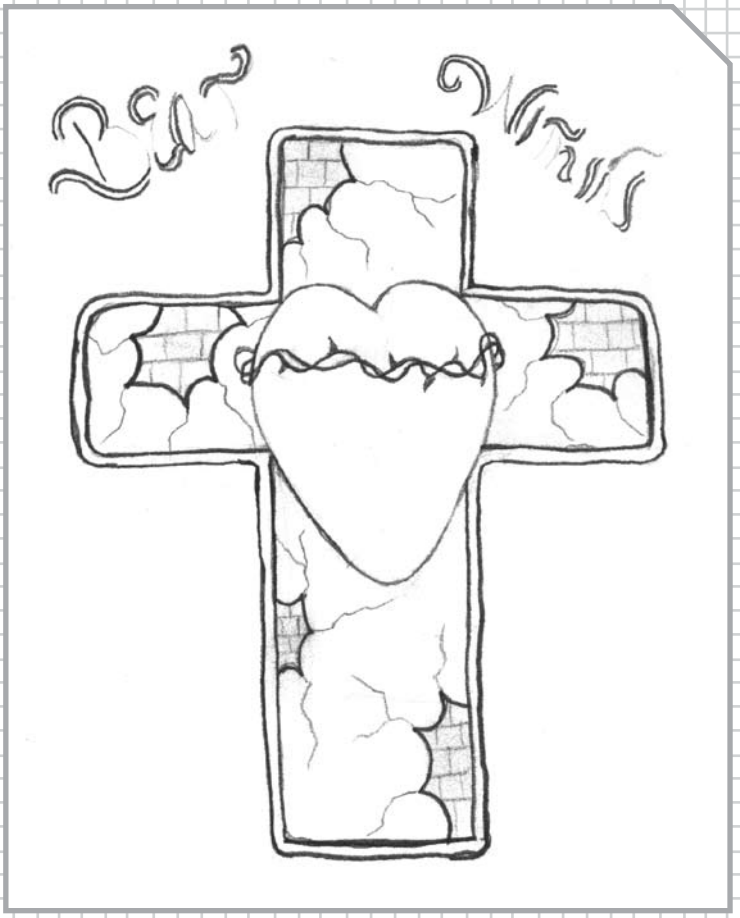
When I'm Away

What's poppin' Beat? The Skip ninja bringing it back like the rewind button, ya dig? I hate coming here, not because it's wrong (well, that too), but because I leave so many people behind such as my mom, dad, cousins, sisters, brothers, homies, and most of all my baby mama and daughter.

I missed my daughter's third birthday and it messed my heart up bad. But I can't blame no one for that but myself. I need to stop sayin' that I'm not coming back, and actually stick to it like a piece of duct tape, you feel me. But I'ma keep it brief and do it moving, like the President's mouth

-Lil' Skippa, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you're not keeping it moving like the President's mouth — because whenever we see his mouth moving, we know he's lying! Besides the fact that you're way too young to have a three-year-old daughter, it's really too bad that you thought something else was more important than her, which is why you're here. If you keep saying you're not coming back, what's the hardest part of keeping that promise? If you can't do it for your daughter, then what will make you do it?



Bein' Able to See Her Face

I came home and only thought about you
I had to hit your phone so we could be close again
Like we used to be if it's still cool
Bein' able to see her face
Just getting the chance
To stare into your big beautiful brown eyes again
Is something' I could sit and do for the longest
But me been' away from you
Stops all action that I wanna make happen
Bein' able to see her face
Sittin' next to you and just listenin' to your voice
makes my head float out to sea where I could spend life
just me and you is how I want us to be
but these streets we in won't let us be free
Bein' able to see her face
Seein' you laugh and lookin' at them cute ass dimples
Gives me the chills
Sittin' in a corner wonderin'
If bein' alone is getting to you as much as it does me
I mean havin' you as my boo
Is like havin' the meal ticket everybody want but can't have
Bein' able to see her face
Bein' your dude to me is a dream come true
And I can't see me bein' without or losin' you
You're my syrup to a cold, my hot cocoa in the snow
I just gotta have you here with me and I can't let you go
Bein' able to see her face
I love you girl

-Lil' Solid, Alameda

From The Beat: "Hot cocoa in the snow"! What a terrific image. It's good to see that your feelings continue to inspire you to push yourself as a person and as a poet. You truly do have a muse!

One-Way Ticket To ATL

Hey what's yackin' Beat? Me I'm cool, they letting me go back to camp, you feel? Not everybody get that choice.

I think I was blessed cause I have a CYA commitment. And when I ran I was not thinking about nothing. To keep it real with everyone. But this time I'ma do my program, because this time I got goals.

My goals are: When I pass camp on a good note, I'm gonna go back to school. And get my high school diploma. Then go to Laney for two years and my AA degree in criminal justice.

Then I gonna go to ATL were my girl at, because she want me to stay out there with her. But you know I got to come back to the town, you feel me? But yeah I am trying to change my life around while I still can, but I don't have to wish for one way ticket. because these are my goals for my future. It's also my life.

-Yung Akay

From The Beat: These are serious goals – if you meet them, and step to what you need to step to, to make them come true, you might just be knee-deep in round trip tickets, first class!

On My Way to ROP

What's good with The Beat, this be that homeboy Lil' Box from Hayward and I wanted to write The Beat and say that I'm about to be leaving soon to ROP in Nevada and all I'm in here for is a violation of probation and the last group home I was in I graduated in and I came back for dirty pee test for THC and don't go to school now.

They got me in May waiting for ROP so I just want to say that they getting tired of us. They are trying to wash us now, so wherever they send you pimp that shhh and get out.

But me I'm about to be 18 in like 7 months so that's the longest I'm staying at ROP. Either they release me or I'm going through group home to group home all my life. I missed too much shit out there on the turf. So that's all I wanted to write so hopefully by the time you read this I'll be in ROP , doing my thang and to all that know me be safe and keep your head up. I'm gone.

-Lil' Box

From The Beat: You do have the power to avoid being 'washed.' There are tons of programs out there to help you get job training (check out Cypress-Mandela or the Omega Boys Club for information). You need more to look forward to than just getting back to "the turf"...Keep your head up. Peace.

School is like our own Civil War

I like going to school because life is a lot more boring without school. I always went to school even though at times it reminded me of ground zero students getting shot every other month. Kids would go to school just to engage in shootouts. At times it seemed like we were having our own Civil War.

When I used to walk to school I always carried a banger or two, because I did not feel safe but I didn't bring negative attention to myself.

People did not see me as a troublemaker but they knew I would bring it to them if they wanted. Hangin' out, with my potnas was my favorite thing to do with my homies and my crew, I'm affiliated with the Asians and the Mexicans, and the Arabs. My friends respect me because I'm solid.

-Ice Mayne

From The Beat: Do you think there's any way to end this "civil war?" Do you ever wonder what it would be like to have more peace – no fear, no funerals, no need to carry a gun. Where do you see yourself five years from now?

Tears From A Star

My tears they fall
With passion like tears
Conceived from stars
Full of brightness and energy
Seen only from afar
Tonight these tears
Are full of pain only
Of the vain
So with purity
I shall live for eternity

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: Do you feel that tears heal, that they help soothe pain, or that they make it worse? Or do you feel that there are different kinds of tears?

I'm Missing You

Damn it's a brand new year 2008.
I'm still running wild without you here.
My life continues to turn to the street life.
This shhh is always gon' be the same.
I'm always gonna do me while you're gone.
But just know that I'm waiting to come home.
Sometimes this funk shhh get rough
But I'ma always keep that chrome thang safety mane.
Me and my ninjas will always stay that same but without you the Game than change.
Always keep us in your mind.
Lil Shadow gon' always ride when that time come
That's why I'm missin' you to death.

-Lil' Shadow

From The Beat: You are in a prison far more brutal than the locked doors of juvenile hall, and that's the death mindset that you keep yourself in. It doesn't have to be this way you know. There are people who get out of the game before they lose it all. Don't you think you could be one of these people?

My Quest

If in my quest to achieve my goals
I stumble crumble and lose my soul
those who knew me would easily cosign
there was never a life as hard as mine.
No mom no father no money
I only follow that voice inside
And if it guides me to where I don't win I
I learn from my mistakes and try again.

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: That voice inside can save you from further heartbreak in the future. It's strong and eloquent and has an important story to tell and share.

Questions And Answers

A piece of art that go to me, even though I don't know the name, is a picture that has black people going dumb in the church. Even though they didn't know about it at the time, the picture represent to me, be yourself every were and be happy through hardships. When we grew up my family and peers we were raised on when the elders went to jail they were in school. Even though it wasn't the best lie, I guess it was somewhat true, 'cause now I'm in here the main program is school.

If some one with money was to give me a ticket, which is rare, I would go to New York.

-James

From The Beat: We wish we could see that picture, it sounds like it's full of joy and inspiration. As for school, do you feel like you learn more in Juvy or when you are out in the free world?

To My Baby Mama

Damn Baby I know it
Seem like a struggle
But I depend on you and God
In this time of trouble
Two kids everything is
gonna be such a hustle
I just can't wait to do
My time to help the income double
I know we had hard times
But it's gonna be all good
For a successful future
I will do everything I could
I love you, you don't know what
I would do without you
Your strong baby I see
And I'm sorry for every time
I doubt you. I love you!

-T-Rex

From The Beat: Remember that what your loved ones need from you is to stay out of jail, to live up to your talents potential and hope...So how are you going to double that income in the long term, and do it legit?

I Got To Change

I want to live life good
But I can't 'cause I am stacking the hood
Weed drink and pills I want to change and I wish I could.
So I'ma try to change my ways
So I can make my family proud of me.
So when I get out I'm gonna get a job
And stop robbing people for money plus I got a baby on the way
So I got to change.
Free my cousin Adam aka Lil' Young.

-Malik

From The Beat: Wow – you're going to be a father? Are you excited or are you stressed by it? What's the first thing you need to change as you move on to this new stage in your life?

Sick

I'm sick of jail
I'm sick of the food in jail
I'm sick of the clothes in jail
I'm sick of the rooms in jail
I'm sick of air in jail matter of fact
I'm sick of the choices I make to get in jail

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: Good! Get sick and stay sick! The sicker you get of all this stuff, the quicker you can start making the healthy decisions that would help you in life. Can you give us an example of a healthy decision you would want to make?

The World

Welcome to Lil' Momo's world
Where nothing goes as planned
Where you have no moms no pops
You live in foster homes and group homes.
Where your moms is shot when you're too young to know
And then your father runs out
Now you got no fam
What do you do?
You move to Momo's world

-Lil' Momo

From The Beat: There's pain in Momo's world, but there's also heart, love, talent, passion, hopes. Keep those poems coming, teach The Beat about Momo's world.

Distress

I miss my little sister words I can't express.
I don't know why I'm here and feeling so depressed.
But I'm doin' my best to pass this test.
I don't even know why I got myself in this mess.
I even miss my grandparents I have to confess
I'm doin' my best in here so fahgit the rest.

-Espinoza

From The Beat: You're facing stress, under duress, but if you focus on how you're blessed, this can work out in your best interest!

To Mother

I hope my mom can hear this poem 'cause it's dedicated to her.
I wish that dumb ninja didn't pull the trigger for your purse
'Cause then you ended up in a black hearse
He should've known we were home all alone in the dark
Momma he broke my heart
And now it's time for me to break
I'll see you sooner than later
So momma don't start.

-Lil' Momo

From the Beat: Your Mom would never want you to rush and find her "sooner rather than later." Your life here matters – make the most of it!

Destined to Come Here

Me, my mom and dad have been in and out of jail, so for me I felt kind of destined to come here sooner or later. I have always had a temper that I try to control but it gets me into a lot of trouble but hey...

-Soup

From The Beat: Do you believe you can escape the history your parents have had to live through? It sounds as if the problem is really your temper, more than your parents. What kinds of efforts would you need to make to improve your own anger management skills?

Kids Know More Than You Think

When I come to the hall and the people I leave behind, I feel sad but I can't do nothing about it. And all my little brothers, nephews or any of the little family see me in here. They ask me where I'm at I try to lie, and my family tries to lie, but they already know 'cause they probably heard about it or they heard it at school or I think on TV.

'Cause you might think kids don't know that much but they do so I don't know.

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: It must be painful seeing them under these circumstances, and missing them so much. When you were little, did you ever have someone you looked up to go to jail? How did you feel? And yes, we agree, kids know a lot more than you think.

Thirty Days Instead Of Four Months

What's up Beat! It's Dopey from Hayward writin' you from the Hall once again. I was at camp but I got into a gang-related fight so they kicked me out because I'm 18, but I beat my gang enhancement so I'm just got to do 30 days either in here or Rita.

I find out on the 16th. I'm not really trippin' 'cause I had four months left at camp, now I get out in thirty days.

To all locked up, keep your head high and stay solid.

-Dopey

From The Beat: You beat that GE in the courts, but you're still a prisoner of that mindset. Are you ever going to set yourself free from a lifestyle that can only bring you more pain?

In This Hell Hole

When I came to the hall my mom told my lil' brother and sister the truth. But she also told them it's not my fault I'm in this hell hole.

I don't know what they might do when I get back home though. I think they would be happy to see me again, because they didn't see their big brother for a month. I talked to them over the phone and they sound sad that I was gone so I think they're going to be happy to see me .

I would tell them I was in the hall because my used-to-be friend lied on me. It's gonna be easy to tell them what happened though.

I really don't know someone went to jail when I was very little, but when I was ten, I already understood why my uncle went to jail. He didn't have to really have to really explain to me what jail was or why he went.

-Czerney

From The Beat: It sounds like your little brother and sister really look up to you – does thinking about them make it easier for you to stay on point and make plans for a positive future?

All I Want Is A Ticket Home

One thing for me is to leave the place I am at right now. I would use my one way ticket to go home, because I hate leaving my family. If my family can't see me it does not feel right. I came here to the Hall and I felt like I let some people down that looked up to me…like my five-year-old brother and my church family.

If I could I would leave this place and then be on my way to my house where I feel more safer.

-Lamar

From The Beat: They say that the best thing about being homesick is that it proves you have a home to be sick for. Does missing your little brother and your church family make you appreciate them more?

Brazil

I want to go to Brazil because there is a lot of beautiful sights out there. One of the things I would like to see is the Rio de Janeiro of "Christ the Redeemer". I heard the statue could be seen on top of a hill over eight miles away from a nearby city. Another stop in Brazil would be to the famous beaches, because I read something about that, it said Brazil was home to some of the most beautiful people in the world and the only way to see those beautiful ladies is to go to the beach were they leave little to the imagination…

-Saw Saw Young

From The Beat: We hope you get to go to Brazil one day, both for your spiritual and, um, not so spiritual reasons!

Bikinis Made of Benjamins

If someone gave a one way ticket bus pass to anywhere in the world I would definitely choose to go to Barbados. It's an incredible beach and high living city by the sea.

Unlike the Bay Area or Oakland it has shining beaches crystal clear, see through waters and probably gorgeous women with bikinis made of Benjamins.

I would try to find a job with my clever crazy thoughts and intelligent mind along with my natural beauty. They I would work on my acting to become a world famous actor, fly back to L.A. meet up with Dre, make some new beats and call it a day.

-Mike

From The Beat: These are big dreams, but you could achieve them if you wanted to. What's the first step you'd need to take to get this life?

Where All The Pretty Girls At

If I could go anywhere in the world that I wanted to Brazil where all the pretty ass girls at. From what I hear they do anything you want them to. I'ma try to go there when I get or go to Jamaica, because they have something special about them.

I've been to Jamaica once because my uncle is from there. I'm planning to go to New Orleans when I get out too. California is too dry. There's nothing to do out here.

-Young Teddy

From The Beat: Funny to hear you say that there's nothing to do in California. So many people come here because it's considered the most fun state in the nation. Do you go to the beach, have you seen Yosemite? Have you traveled down to San Diego? Did you know you can dive for seafood off the coast and cook it up fresh? It's good to want to travel, but first travel off your block!

First Class to Hawaii

If I had a one-way plane ticket I would go to Hawaii. I would love a first class too. It would take a few hours but it's worth it. I chose Hawaii because it seems like a fun place to go to…

I would was to see the beach, the cities, basically the whole land. I never dream about it but I always think about it though.

-Lil' Los

From The Beat: The best thing about Hawaii is that the water there is warm enough to swim in (unlike in the Bay Area), but since you like the beach so much, do you ever go to Ocean Beach in the city? It's still really beautiful, even though the water is cold.

One Way Ticket To NYC

If some one was to give me a one-way ticket to somewhere I would go to NYC.

The reason why I choose this destination is because it would be a good place to start a new life and to get out of the hood so you can make it passed the age 18.

Also, 'cause it's a place where I never been and would like to go there. Another destination would be to go home. That's my main destination right now because I don't belong in here.

Most of the staff say that I don't belong but once I recover from this mistake I'll get to my destination. Home.

-Lo

From The Beat: Lo, whether you go home or to NYC, we hope you do get to start a new life and never get tangled up in the system again. We hope you can figure out how to avoid making that same mistake that got you into the hall.

Ma Cousin

When my cousin went away
He got busted for a drug trade
He was heading towards the south
Someone snitched. Couldn't bail him out
His home boys ran, they was five deep
When they got caught up by the feds
Tried to lock him for straight ten
Plus deportation. What can I say
I was just a little kid.
I was missing ma big cous' we used
To live together up in E.P.A.
I'll never forget that dreadful day.

-Big Rig

From The Beat: It's a tough thing to be little and have someone who you care about get locked up. Who are the young kids in your life now who are missing you? How can you help them avoid ending up locked up like you and your cousin?

When You're Away...

Man when I away locked up I'm leaving my little nephew at home wondering where I am all day and all night. When I call the house and he ask my mom, or my sister who she talking and they tell him it's me he always get on the phone and ask me where I'm at and when I'm coming home and dat he miss me and shhh. I tell you right now dat shhh lightweight hurts to have him say that, but when he ask me where I'm at I tell him I'm at a friends house for a little while, but I can't keep telling him the same thing because he starting to ask me about clothes because he know when I left that morning I didn't have any wit' me but what was on my back.

I know how he feel about missing me, because when I was a little youngster, his mama was in the same place I am in right now, and I missed the hell out of her because she would always take me places and buy me things. But when she was gone, I would cry and run around yelling, "I want my sister!" and my mama told me my nephew is doing the same thing. Man, do you know how much that hurts to hear about that and to hear my mom cry when she hears my voice like I just came back from the dead or something like that. Man that shhh make me sick. Damn, when I get out I ain't coming back.

-Richard

From The Beat: Richard, we feel how much this hurts you and the people you love. It's crazy painful. Sometimes the things other family members go through can shape the choices we make, or how we think our life is going to go, like you seeing your sister in jail. So here's the thing: when you get out, you need to figure out how you're gonna stay out (for real), but you also need to figure out how you can help your nephew stay on the outs when he gets older. What would've helped in your case? How you gonna make sure it stops with you?

Returning To The Scene

When I went away so many things went wrong,
a lot of bad been happening.
I been in here hella long and a lot been happening on the outs
everybody is waiting on the King to hit the streets
so I could start back doin' my thang and get them streets back
in my hand so I'm waitin' another year or so
I'll be back and I'm goin' do my thang way harder.

- Goon

From The Beat: Hey, we understand that right now things are going bad on the outs, but sounds like your solution will have you doing the same things you were doing before—the same things that got you locked up. Why are you willing to risk getting locked up again? If you're strong enough to be King, we bet you're strong enough to make choices that help you stay on the outs.

Judge And The D-A

I live my life everyday living with stress on my mind,
trying to survive, taking day by day and day at a time.
Judge washing minors out from the past of they life,
DA hating on a ninja trying to give his second strike.
It's up to the judge but the DA recommend
it's looking ugly for you if the witness is on the stand.
The judge and the DA is one big team they won't try to save a thing
but they will save a dope fiend.
They will hit you with 20 get out when you 33
You an innocent man until you proven and guilty!

-Jamarco

From The Beat: We like your rhythms and rhymes, especially in your first half of your rap. This is a good piece. And yeah, the justice system often isn't fair, so when you get out, how about staying far enough away from this shhh that nobody has reason to think you might be guilty?

One way ticket to...

If I had a one way ticket I'd go to my DECA competition in Atlanta, Georgia. I am ranked 2nd in all California in FMS. I have already paid for the world-wide competition. I hope to see my self on stage as the winner.

-Hassan

From The Beat: How did you get to be ranked 2nd in California and still find time to get yourself locked up in the hall? Once you're on the outs, we wish you good luck in standing on that stage as the winner and keeping yourself out of the hall.

Dead Time

I'm sitting in here waiting to go court to see where they going to send me. I'm doing a lot of dead time.

My time start when I go whichever placement they put me in. I would rather be at CYA or ROP right because I'm getting tired of being in here.

I heard that CYA gets more freedom and that's what I need.

I go to court on the 24th of April and I can't wait but I'm kind of nervous because I don't want to hear how many years I'm going to have to do. They trying to give me seven years at CYA, but I not trying to do that much time because I got a family to take care of. I been in here for five months today and it feels like I been in here for years. I know I can do the time but I don't want to because I want to get out and support my family.

K-nuddy

From The Beat: K-nuddy, sounds like you're looking for some more freedom, more action, and we can see why you'd be bored. But wherever you end up going, remember how hard it is to be away from your family. Don't let the desire for action get you in trouble and keep you locked up longer. See if you can find interest in things that can help you stick to your goals: books, counselors, anger management, etc, to make a new plan and new habits so when you get out you can dedicate yourself to your people. Then you'll find yourself a way to avoid the things that brought you here in the first place.

When You're Away

When I'm in jail, they often have to let the lil' ones know I'm somewhere while I'm in jail. They often tell them I'm at school so that it don't affect them in the long run feel me.

-Keith

From The Beat: Even if the lil' ones don't know you're in the hall, they know you're not with them, and that's gotta hurt. For their sakes, you need to stay cool and figure out how you gonna stay on the outs.

Ticket

What's up? Yeah this Lil' Roland still in max. Waitin' for them to come get me for the Y. But my ticket is getting out the Y. My ticket back to home.

When I get out my ticket is going to be going to college and then I also want to travel. I want to go a lot of places. There are a lot of places I could go to have fun besides in my hood.

I need to change my environment. I think I could do better in different places. I ain't really been nowhere besides Reno and Los Angeles. So I want to experience places... But yeah I'm gone do my thang when I get out an ninjas gon' be hatin'.

-RoRo

From The Beat: RoRo, we think travel would be a great thing for you, change up your environment so you can find some new ways of having fun and living your life. We're confused, though, 'cause even though you want to change your environment, at the end of your piece it sounds like maybe you're gonna still get involved with "ninjas hatin." How 'bout you do your thang in a new way, and stay up off the haters so you don't get sucked in too?

One Way Ticket

I got a one-way ticket to hell
Locked down in a place that they call county jail
I got a one-way ticket to hell
When the staff always reading our mail
I got a one-way ticket to hell
Locked down at camp and I want to raise hell
I got a one-way ticket to hell
Where ninjas fake like girls with gel and braids in their hair
I got a one-way ticket to hell
Free me and all my ninjas from county jail

-Lil' T the Freestyle King

From The Beat: If you stay on point and learn not to slip, you could turn that one way into a straight round trip! Keep the rhymes coming.

Poem Of Me

Life in the projects is more than you can imagine,
Guns bustin' every day, that's the way it happen.
I'm the baby so I gotta hold it down,
You definitely can't come to the turf if you not from our town.
Ninjas droppin' like flies and not a tear in my eyes,
Yellin' "man down," That's another homicide.
Stay in recs all day and Ed Nordy all night,
Got a girl coming through and I gotta do her right.
I gotta stay wet in the Coupe on deuces,
Young Teddy stay cute man I thought you knew this.

-Young Teddy

From The Beat: You've show talent in your rhyme but you're doing time from the life of crime that's taken over your mind. Take a break and use your mental skills, to see that you're talking about a "life" that kills.

Best Baseball: A Day That Could Have Been

The best baseball game that I ever had was when I was like twelve and I was in Hayward Little League. We beat this one team by like six points and everyone on my team had a double or better and was the championship and we won so that was the best baseball game I ever played.

TBW: Did the coach ever take you out afterwards?

Yes the coach did he took us to go eat pizza and the whole team enjoyed or at least I enjoyed it and after that they took me home. My parents were proud of me and not only was it the best baseball game of my life -- it was one of the best days of my life too.

-Lil' Los

From The Beat: Have you ever wondered what your life would have been like if you had kept playing baseball? ROP has baseball – if that's where you end up, do you think you'll play? You deserve more happy days.

Art That Blows My Mind

What's up Beat, This Linh from Camp Sweeney. This my 4th month up in here. Well yeah. Art that blows my mind is a girl's body shape, curve and how they look for me that's art. Especially the girl has to keep her shape.

Because if they fat than that's just nasty seeing a lot of blubber. That ain't art that's fat. But yeah. I think poetry is art also. If you express how you feel than that's art. So much things is art but most of all is a girl's body. It's sexy. Especially their legs. You feel me.

-Linh

From The Beat: We feel you, but the human body is portrayed as art in all shapes and forms. Back in the day it was sexy for a woman to be fat because it meant that she was rich because she could afford to eat a lot. So maybe a picture of a girl's body that has some fat on it can be considered art too.

Food For Thought

Ponder a pious position
And proceed to perceive perception
At its pinnacle perspective.

-T-Rex

From The Beat: Plus – perceive positive permutations of personality and their primal potential to place you in positions of power and pecuniary progress – permanently!

From The "Y" And Back

What it do Beat long time no see huh?

Yea if you don't know by now this is ya boy Lil' Naudie-bo.

Last time y'all saw me I was on my way to the "Y". Yeah I went and did about a year and some change. They let me out on juvenile probation instead of parole, which was a good thing, but unfortunately I violated my house arrest after being out for two months. But God willing they let me out on house arrest tomorrow. But that's enough about me, since y'all already know my beat with in topic so let me stop wasting lines. Rest in peace to my bra Marcellus Haley. Still kept in mind ninjas made two days out of the year a official Cell day.

Bra I know ninjas said they was gonna be legit this summer for you. But ninjas on the run and some more shhh in whips with no L's ...all types of shhh. I can't speak for the next ninja but fa'sho I'ma be on my tip in '09.

'Cause this year is get on my feet and get off this probation shhh. I still got to make it to your final resting spot. But yeah bra I'ma get at you in a minute.

-Lil' Naud

From The Beat: We were happy to hear an update from you, but sorry that you are still struggling with the system. Remember what you say here – how you want to be legit for your memory of Marcellus.

Thinking

Thinking about my girl and what she doing on the outs.
Thinking about my hood and how it's a drought.
Thinking about my dad and how he would feel.
Thinking about my pump that bust hot steel.
Thinking about what I bang would it take me somewhere.
Thinking about my sister and how she doing... I know she sick.
I'm in Camp Sweeney, where the drama gets thick.

-Derrick

From The Beat: Some of your thoughts in this poem we had to edit out...they just show how some of your thoughts lead you in a positive direction and some in a negative direction. Which is the direction you want to follow?

One Way Ticket

If someone came up to me and offer me a one way ticket I will have to say is Houston, Texas. The reason I would wanna go to Houston, Texas because my mom talking about moving out there and I wanna know how it is out there.

I hope that Houston, Texas is a great place to stay but I just hope that it just ain't too hot in the summer. If I can't take the weather out there then I would wanna move back to California.

-Lorenzo

From The Beat: Lorenzo, we hope you do get out to Houston with your mom. It can be good to be able to stay near family, not to mention that changing your environment can give you a chance to do things different.

If I Didn't Have You

Missin' you so much, not bein' able to be close to you
and touch but in my head and my feelings we always
together so it don't bother me like it used to.
But when we get back together I'm gon' be on you
somethin' tough but that still ain't enough
If I didn't have you
Bein' away from you for so long got me hot as *&^%
But when I come home I'm stuck like chuck
And that would be just my luck
If I didn't have you
All the shhh we could be doin' together right about now
is too much To count I don't worry too much
'Cause I still got you by my side
Why I don't know but I'm glad that I got a girl like you as
my wife.
If I didn't have you
Making' plans to be stuck to you way past high school
Game is a thing that I don't play
'Cause we got too much together to be throwin' up
And shootin' away so let's keep it if I should die before I
wake
It's 'cause you took my breath away
Livin' without you is like livin' with no air
But how do you expect me to live with only just me
'Cause my world revolves around you it so hard for me
to breathe
So I wonder what would happen if I didn't have you

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Another powerful love poem, Donte, and just more proof that you have a big heart and even bigger talent. If you rely on both these things, you WILL be able to get past all the darkness that you've been facing.

Ready To Go Home

I'm ready to go home and continue on with my life. Being in the system is full of stress and money. They tell us don't come to jail but at the same time, they're getting paid for us being here. We're people's paychecks.

From p.o's, counselors, public defenders and so on. They tell us don't come to jail but steadily getting paid for our wrong doings, they depend on us to come to jail. So being people's paycheck.

-Lil' Mang

From The Beat: If young people would stop coming to jail, The Beat could change its name to The Beat is Out, and boy would we be happy to do that. You're right, stop feeding the machine. Beat the machine instead.

Piece Of Art

The Bible is a piece of art that blows my mind away. When I read it, it paints a visual picture in my mind.

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: It's great that The Bible creates pictures in your mind, but it's hard for us to picture what you're talking about. Paint us a picture by giving us some more details.

Art That Blows Your Mind

A piece of art that really blew my mind was Sun Tzu's Art of War. Even though it was written thousands of years ago it still pertains to modern day life. If you apply the concepts to modern life they still work.

-Hassan

From The Beat: We can really feel your appreciation for this work, but how does it apply to your life? If you had followed the Art of War do you think you'd still be in the hall? Looking at the principles, are there any changes that are needed for the modern world to respect current laws and social realities?

A Place Without Violence

If someone gets me a one-way ticket to anywhere I wanna go, I'll go to Hawaii to chill out there for a couple weeks. I'll go to the beach to go check out the females out there.

I wanna see how it feels to be in a place without having to worry about getting shot at or any other violent things.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It's pretty great, that feeling of peace, where you don't have to look over your shoulder. Do you have places you go to now, where it's safe and relaxed? Do you ever just get out of the city for the weekend?

Way From Home

When I'm away from home I know a lot of people miss me in the real world. But when I'm up here (the hall) I try not to think about them because it's just going to make the time I have long. I don't think anyone lies about me going away anywhere cause goin' to jail is a major thing. Really to keep it away from your family--my family not like that. If I go down, the way any mom and auntie talk I sure the whole world will know I'm in the hall.

When I come back people will be happy to see me but that's just a natural reaction. But then you just have to focus on staying out so that your love ones that do miss you won't feel the pain again.

Well I think a good way to stay out the hall is to stay away from drugs because every time I went down in the hall I was hella loaded. I think if I stay off of drugs then I damn near won't come back in here. 'Cause when you loaded you don't think clear and be on some hot shhh so stay sober n you will be cool! To stay off drugs all I got to think about is being up in here and I think that will be enough

-King Dave

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a family that truly cares and a good plan to stay out of the hall--to save them (and you) from going through this pain again in the future. So look, King Dave, to be a success you'll need to figure out how you are going to make your plan a reality. Think carefully about how you're going to stay off drugs. Where have you been tempted in the past? How will you resist when the opportunity arises this time? Who can you count on (someone who isn't getting loaded) when you need a reality check to keep you on your path?

Africa

If someone gave me a one-way ticket to somewhere I would visit Africa. Why Africa because that's my homeland and I would want to see the different parts see how they livin'.

I know its crazy full of violence but I would want to see they struggle and how bad they got it there. I would just want to experience and see wit' my own eyes what's going on I would want to see the rich parts and poor.

- Goon

From The Beat: It's good to see your homeland. We hope you get there someday so you can see how others live, both rich and poor.

Still Waiting

I'm just still waiting for my charges to be dropped; I know they are. I can't wait till I can go home get out these clothes and get a real shower and eat some real food.

I do miss my girl too it's going to be good when she spend the night when I get out.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Getting out is one thing, but do you have a plan for staying out? We hope your charges get dropped.

Hustle In The Bloodline

Growin' up was all good. I learned a lot over the years, from gamin' up girls, to bein' a solid homeboy.
I've had plenty of haters tryin' to stop my shine, but I will always ride 'cause I got hustle in my bloodline.

I'm positive most of the time and I'm a family type ninja. I hate the system because it ruined my childhood by taking me from my family. They didn't give me a chance to prove myself. The PO hated me and now I'm at camp. I get out in September. I'll have my diploma and be 18.

I'm gonna pimp the system one more time. It's not that easy doin' good nowadays, there's too much time on our hands. Hella funk, people snitchin, everyone trying' to be better than the next person. For all who are locked up, get out and handle your business. Keep your back straight, chin up and stay focused.

-Mousie

From The Beat: When you say stay focused, what do you want to stay focused on? The funk? The homeboys? What about staying focused on life goals. Now that you have that diploma, and you're 18, there are a lot of work and school possibilities waiting for you. What dreams or plans do you have for the next phase of your life: Adulthood!

Growing Up

In my old neighborhood it was hectic. I would see someone get robbed everyday. After I moved away I started to see a better change. When I grew up I went back to go kick it and I turned out bad.

I'm in camp now trying to make a change. The funk makes me bad, but my family is what make me do better. If I had it I would continue going to school and work on being a mechanic.

-D

From The Beat: Now that you know that kicking it in the old neighborhood leads you down the wrong path, do you plan on staying away from now on? Did your family move you away because they were hoping to keep you safe?

A Positive School Experience

A positive school experience is when I graduated from middle high school.. I was doing good in school until I started getting in trouble and going to jail. I'm hoping to graduate from high school and do something with my life.

I would like to get well paid and live a happy life with a family. If I keep coming back to jail I won't graduate. If I spend less time in school I'll stay in the system without getting my education.

-Jose

From The Beat: Does this mean that you've decided to put serious effort into school? We hope so! If you did well before, doesn't that mean you could do well once again?

My Baby Boy

This your boy Looney once again here writing to update y'all on my baby boy. He's about two weeks old and he smiles a lot. He doesn't cry too much, only if he's hungry or if you pass him around to someone else. I

love him with all my heart. I can't wait 'till he could talk and walk. That's gonna be cool but I really ain't got too much to say beat. I'm kinda tired so I'ma close it up! Later.

-Looney

From The Beat: We can't wait until you get out and can be the fulltime dad we know you have it in you to be. How are you getting along with your baby mama? Is it stressful only getting to be with your family on the weekends?

My First Home Pass

What's good Beat! It's your boy Oso from Livermore, writing you from Camp Sweeney. I got two more weeks for my first home pass and it's going to be all good. I haven't seen my family in two months, I can't wait. My little brother just got out the hall on ankle monitor, so I'm gonna tell him to stay out of trouble 'cause the hall is all bad.

I'm gonna be 18 in a few months so I need to be coo" up here 'cause it ain't going to be Juvenile Hall no more. it's gonna be Santa Rita so I need to lay low, me entiendes?.

TBW: What are you going to do to celebrate?

Well I asked my mom if she can make some of her enchiladas 'cause I haven't ate those in a long time and damn my mom makes them real good.

Do you have drama waiting for you out there?

And when I get home my dad wanted to talk to me about what am I going to do when I'm 18, well I'm going to college and get a good job.

-Oso

From The Beat: We can't wait to hear how this visit turned out, and whether or not you had a good talk with your dad.

Learn What You Got

I think if someone tell you something important in life you should listen. You should listen to the advice because it will help. If you go to school, listen to what the teacher is telling you because it will help you later in life. Math is good for you because if you grind you gotta know your money.

Some people talk about they got loot and when we in class doing addition they always ask for the answer to the person next to them. If they knew they money then they woulda did it. If they don't know their money or do they should still learn their math and money. What I'm tryna say is if the work or advice is in front of you, take advantage of it, so you can be smart in the mind when you grow up.

-Linh

From The Beat: We're with you on all this, except that we promise you, the better you know your math, the more you'll realize that the grind is a terrible way to make a profit. No health insurance, huge liabilities, the possibility of having of work for prison wages, and finally the suffering you can't even put a price on. Do the math!

Texas Bound

I take that one ticket and go to Texas with my family because it better out there for me. It'll get me away from the Alameda County because they always messing with black people with racism and I don't need all that in my life. It fun out there because you around love ones who care.

-Sam

From The Beat: Sam, we hope you do get to spend some time with your loved ones, whether in Alameda County or Texas. Racism is a nasty powerful force. What do you think you could contribute to help turn it around?

When I'm M.I.A...

My lil' bra old enough to know where I'm at, but my lil cousin like four. He don't know too much but I keep it P.I. with him. He know I'm in here. I don't sugar coat none with him. You ask him he gone tell you, Free Nam!

-Mackin' Nam

From The Beat: We hope that once you get out you can keep yourself free so you get to hang out with your brother and cousin in person.

When I'm Away

When I came to the hall I left everything I had behind. I had a big family of 10 brothers and sisters and me being in here today will not work. I love my family and they love me. Every day I think of them and miss them every moment. If you didn't know a thug have feelings too. We just don't let people see it.

My little brother was looking up to me. He's 11 years old and everything I know I taught him. But some things was wrong.

But yeah I been away from my family for 3 months and I'm going to ROP for 9-18 months and going to be gone for a little while. But soon I'll be home. Also, when I get out I'm going to teach my brother the right thing instead of the wrong way cause I stepped my game up and got more knowledge and wisdom, so I'm going to handle my business.

Here is what I learned from right from wrong. The wrong thing is that when you are under the influence of drugs and with a pistol. That the wrong way. Also, when you don't go to school and learn the things you need to know. The right way is when you go to school and learn everything, even though you don't know why you need to learn it. And when you have a job and if you have a family you have to be there for them no matter what.

-Magnificent

From The Beat: Magnificent, we see how clear you've gotten about what you want to change when you get out. You know your little brother looks up to you, and it is urgent that you do all you can to let him know you were wrong about some things, and to set him on the right path. You could be the difference between prison and being on the outs for him. And while your words are important, your actions are too. You're his role model. You're smart and talented—keep yourself on the outs and that's the best kind of teaching you can do. Mahatma Gandhi said something profound a long time ago: "Be the change you seek in the world." You need to be the change for him.

One Way Ticket to Jamaica

If some one with money offered me a one way ticket to anywhere I'll go to Jamaica there's no specific reason why I would go there but I'll go. I'll choose Jamaica because it seems like a perfect place to get away and start a new life.

I'd look forward to learning a new language, meeting new people and being in a new environment. I never dreamed about going there but one day I'll be there. Sitting on a sandy beach boomin' everything in sight, raisin' the next generation of hell.

-Chippa

From The Beat: Chippa, we're not quite sure what you mean by "boomin' everything in sight" but when you're "raisin' da next generation of hell," you need to make sure don't get locked up again. Is raising hell going to keep you on the outs?

Living The Streets

Try living these streets every day,
Walking around trying to get paid.
Selling yay even though this game been played,
Thanking the lord I am alive today.
I've been shot, stabbed, jump and beat to a bloody mess
Until there wasn't nothin' left.
I should've been dead by the age of ten,
My life is nothing but a world of sin.
I need to make amends for the crimes I committed,
It's too late … my life already came to an end..

-Lil' Leprechaun

From The Beat: There will come a day, perhaps, when it's too late. But that hasn't come in your life yet, and like you say, this game is already played. Dare to pursue your dreams, it's the only way to escape the nightmares.

Another Time Another Day

I ain't gonna do drugs no more. At least until I get released. And for y'all that are up in a group home or a camp placement, y'all need to handle your business and pimp the program that the judge has you doing. See the whole point of all this is to get released and take advantage of any privileges y'all can have. While in that program. I don't know about y'all, but I wanna go back to my love ones and the hood.

-Young Boxer

From The Beat: The point is to get released, sure, but what about after you get released? Do you have a life plan, a vision for your future that doesn't involve the hood, the partying, the drama? We hope so, because this senseless war has claimed too many lies already.

All My Life

All my life I pray for someone like you
You brighten my day and make my grey days blue
Babe…your smile makes me smile
And for you I'll walk a thousand miles
You make my fantasies become true and wild
You're the last thing on my mind when I go to bed
Its cute when you drink cause your cheeks turn red
You're the most beautiful girl in the whole wide world
I mean what I say it's no lie babygirl
When I look in your eyes it's so exotic
I love to smell you, you smell so tropic
I love the day 4-14-07
Since that day of my life felt like heaven
Together we go through pain and pleasure
My love for you no one can measure
When I think of you I think of life
Being with you makes me feel high as a kite
When I touch you the feelings are so precious
Our moments together I will always cherish
I hope the rest of our relationship stays strong and true
All my life I pray for someone like you.

-Hamster

From The Beat: The best thing you can do to make this love last is to get your freedom and keep it. Stay by your girl's side where you belong, instead of locked up and having to settle for letters….

Something New "Like You"

Having something new is what I'ma get outta you
'Cause it's like startin' a new chapter in a book
You gotta keep reading to see what's gonna happen
Some people like old some like new
But I'ma stick it out and stay true
Find out what a relationship with you is like a brand new outfit 'Cause I just gotta try it out
And find out if I wanna keep it or leave it,
'Cause something solid in my life is what I need
Somebody to come home to
And I have a reason to stay inside
That's ready to ride on The Kid's mind, something like 24-9
I need a locker combination too what you willin' to trust me with?
But havin' someone real and makin' it last is what I'm tryna find…to be continued…

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: These poems you write get better each week, but we worry because we'd hate to see you putting all your hopes on a relationship. You have your own plans too, right? School, work, friends (if you have positive ones you can trust), family (if there's family that won't keep you down)…are you putting energy into those thoughts as well? Peace.

State of Mind

My state of mind
I'm doin' this time
I didn't do nothing but I ain't gonna whine
I'ma get this time done real fast
Never look back never look in the past
I know who did the crime but I ain't gonna
React
I'ma stay at this camp stuff and just
Kick back.

-Lil' Roto

From The Beat: We hope that what you do while you kick back is still focus on your rhymes and flows, and anything else that helps you keep your mental straight while you finish up your time!

When I'm Away

Well I only have one younger sibling. Also, she is only one year younger than me so she understands. My mom tells her where I am. She doesn't have to lie to her. And yes, it is easy to explain to her. And yes, when I was young my dad was always going back and forth to Santa Rita. And my grandpa used to always bring me and my big brother over there to visit my father.

Well back to my little sister, yes she understands because my dad, brother and me been to jail. So it's a normal thing for one of us to go away. But my big brother doesn't really do that much time in jail, only like a day or two. But me and my dad do the most time.

-Andrew

From The Beat: Since you and the people you call family is always finding y'all selves behind bars what is it that you need to do to change that cycle? In addition, never say that going to jail is normal in any kind of way, because the way you feel when you're up in there let you know that it's not normal.

Mad At Myself

I'm sittin' at camp mad at myself because I put myself in another stupid predicament by not payin' attention to my surroundings and others, which led to my stupidity and reactions so now I have gotten a chance to redeem myself and come correct.

Mad at myself
Right now I'm supposed to be at home with my family, at my regular school playin' football, basketball, and anything else I can get into. Plus wearin' my own clothes and sleepin' in my own bed but instead everything is county provided.

Mad at myself
Missin' my wife 24-12 'cause she stickin' with The Kid through it all and I love her to death but with all the shhh I've took her through these past couple of months. She prollly mad as hell at me but I don't blame her for none of it 'cause she still gon' be there, I hope?

Mad at myself
I'm takin' myself through so much but the people around me go through so much more than I think about but I'm still doin' stupid shhh but I'm learnin' a lot more now than I was. Not carin' and just doin' whatever felt good right then. The kid is still a kid but is closer to a young man now than I was back then.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: The kid gets closer to manhood every time he controls his temper, manages to think long term or pushes past an emotional moment. We've been proud watching you mature week by week, and we're sure you will continue.

Will You Be My Spouse

I love your scent
You taste so sweet
No other woman could compete
Your smile as bright as the blazing sun
If you put my love on a scale it be more than a thousand tons
You're the sexiest woman I've ever seen
You're way badder than any woman in anyone's dreams
You're all I think about
And it's you I couldn't live without
I love you with all my heart
Even if I had the chance I still wouldn't restart
I'd just rewind to the first day I met you
'Cause that was the best thing in the world
But what's even better was the day you became my girl
When we're together it's the best
When we're apart I get pains in my chest
I never want us to separate
I just want our relationship to escalate
No matter what we go through baby I will always be there
Even if we got into a fight or you lost all your hair
That's just how much I love you
I put no one above you
Well baby I'll close this out
But before I do baby will you be my spouse!

-Spwaru

From The Beat: Remember that in order to make this relationship work, you also need to focus on whatever else is happening in your life...That means doing your program, keeping yourself sober, and making plans for your future, so you can have the future you deserve, either single or married!

When You're Away

When I'm away from my loved ones they ask where I'm at and then my mom tell them I'm in jail. I be asking my mom why she tell them but then I don't be tripping because all my friends tell them so that's why I don't get mad. I just tell them I was gone, that I was in jail, and they just start asking me why was I in jail, and I just tell them the truth 'cause why should I lie to them.

Once they get older they will understand, that's why I won't lie to my loved ones. Well, please lord take care of my loved ones while I'm in jail. I love all my loved ones, I'll be out on the 18th of April. So I'll see all my loved ones soon. And when I see my loved ones, I'm gonna be happy and I know they're about to be happy to see me, and when I get out I'm about to spend all the time I could with my family; go to restaurants, and go eat and celebrate that I'm out.

I'm doing my time for all my loved ones because I know they don't wanna see me here never again. They missing me and I'm missing them and I'm gonna be with my girl too. Well, take care alrato.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: Learn to do it for yourself and then your family. That way if you were to not hold up to your word it'll hurt you more than it'll hurt your family but of course that's not going to happen are we right?

In My Dreams

If I could go anywhere I wanted to go I would go to the Playboy Mansion. I would go there because it's somewhere I've always been wanting to go. I hope I see a lot of beautiful women there.

-Frankie

From The Beat: We believe you will, but what are you going to say to them when you see them?

Tempted

Man bein' at this camp and then goin' home after months and seein ' how much my squad (my brothas) is eatin' outside -- I'm talking about a young teenage boy with a big faced gold and diamond bezel which is a Jacob the Jeweler... that could be me so easy...

But I stopped that life a minute ago. Well I kinda did, 'cause if I was at home for a long period of time I would go back to it 'cause every time I go around my team it get offered to me, so I don't have to worry about getting it.

But I almost didn't come back this week from my home pass because just seein' shhh like that make me remember countin' stacks on a daily and bein' able to play basketball with the moon.

I be so high but to keep it solid that door is just cracked open and I'm almost able to close.. it but I gotta try to stay away from my squad.

But in it's own crazy away that's impossible 'cause that's my blood, so I'm with them no matter what to the death of me. Regardless, I don't care what it is goin' down. I'm there, but after all that I finally found out what's my downfall is my wantin' and carin' for my inner circle... then I'm with you but if you not, then F** you 'cause you not solid and you gotta be to play on my team.

Another point made. I wanna change the way I am but it's in my blood, so whatever happen happens, I don't care about nothing. I cut all my lil' emotions off a long time ago 'cause people just don't get it this street shhh ain't a game. It's a lotta cats' life and ain't no changin' unless something bigger and better pops up in yo' way.

-Lil Solid

From The Beat: Something bigger and better HAS popped up in your way, and that's you recognizing that you have potential to break away from the pain of your past and achieve the greatness you have inside you. Whether that is continuing to explore your gift for writing, finishing up school and starting to plan for college, finding a way to build a positive relationship with your girl – these are all things worth giving up the street life for. But you talk about your young friend with the gold and diamond – where do you think he'll be in a few years? If you truly want to help your squad, help yourself first, and then come back and show the people you love a different way to be.

How I Got My Ride

I didn't care, I was running around robbing people. So that's how I got some of my money. After my first lick I bought a Buick Regal on 22's with 4-12's. Then people was hating on me so I had to sell my Buick Regal. Then I got a Lexus on 24's, and that's how I'm on 24's. Now people out there, don't hate on me because I'm on 24's.

- Baby Whoday

From The Beat: Don't want to be a steak in a pond of alligators. It's a recession right now and mouths are drooling everywhere you go. Don't give them a reason to bite.

Don't Wanna Be Here No More

I don't want to be in here at all because it's boring. I don't like the food here too. I miss my mom and my other love ones. I miss having freedom. I miss eating what I want to eat at home. I don't like being lock up in a room all day.

I only got six more days then I get to go home. I ain't never come back here. It's a waste of time in here. I'm about to go back to school and do good, so I can go to the ninth grade.

-Antese

From The Beat: Anytime you find yourself behind a steel bar you were doing something terribly wrong. Do us a favor. When you're finally released, remember this place.

Stayin' Focused

Was up Beat this is Lil' Mousie from Hayward, chillin' up at camp trying do this program. Looking forward to going home, 'cause this camp shhh is hella weak.

Hopefully I get out on time and get back to the streets. I'm tired of being on lock down, I'm trying to get straight out there. I start going home soon, and I got hella stuff to do.

For all those coming to camp, just stick with it and do what you gotta do to get out. It's too easy to mess up. All you gotta do is stay focused and maintain. Most of us got family to go home to, so don't let the people that don't bring you down.

For all who are going to groupers then pimp the group home. No program is too hard: Just look at it like this, you ain't doin' life and you ain't in the pen. There's worse places that they could send us, just be glad you got a program to do.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: What do you personally do to stay out of the drama that could hold you back? And does "practicing" maturity in camp help you prep for when you'll have to show maturity staying out of trouble on the outs as well?

What The Beat Don't Know

To keep it real, I don't like The Beat. You talk like you know us, but The Beat don't know anything about nobody in here. You be talking and telling us all this stuff we should do, like we can do it from one day to the other like it's nothing.

I'm not going to change for nobody, so if you don't want me to write to y'all, let me know because y'all be responding like y'all know me, telling me to do this and that, but I'm going to let you know, I do what I do, so if you don't like it let me know. You don't have to put me in the book if you don't want 'cause I know how y'all be.

-Nacho Cheese

From The Beat: You know what? Whether you like it or not, you are still cooperating with this piece. What we want from you is your inner expression. And if this is how you feel today, tomorrow you may feel different. We do our best in trying to understand you, but if you don't let us in your house, we can't come in without your permition or a key. Feel us! How do you feel after expressing your feelings in The Beat? WE appreciate the many pieces you have shared. Keep teaching young NC!!

To The Bahamas

If someone was to offer me an away ticket to anywhere in the world, I would probably go to the Bahamas and see what it feels like to rest in paradise with my Nubian queen. I may start a business and raise a few kids. Maybe ride my mom out to see how wealthy I've become in my life.

-Lil' Dan

From The Beat: What kind of business would you start? And how would you raise your kids? Would you buy your mother a house before you were to buy one of your own?

It Would Be Mexico

I want to go to Mexico and take a million dollars in American money and buy hella gold, and some houses and then trade it all in for Pesos. Bring a girl from across the border.

-Seeking Millions

From The Beat: Good luck! That's a lot of money and a possible thing to make it a reality. Where else would you desire to go in the world and what would you do when you get to these locations.

Left For Dead

I was layin' on the ground
Left for dead wit' a bullet in my head
They said they was my potnas but they all disappeared
Now I'm layin' on the stretch tryna fight for my life
I bet you next time that ya' boy think twice
My phony fake potnas tried to take my life
So I always think twice wit' my hand on the choppa
They ain't gone take my life if they try
Best believe they gone have to fight.

-Jamoni

From The Beat: You need to be very careful who you hang with. You should just stick to being bolo 'cause nowadays you can't trust anybody, especially people that are gonna try to take your life away. That's no joke. So if you value your life, you will be easy and make wiser decisions.

In My Life

I done did a lot of stuff in my life from robbin' people, sellin' drugs, robbin' stores to houses, car jackin', to runnin' in houses and that's all because my father did my family scandalous.

He act grimey towards us so we act grimey towards others. If you disrespect us you gone get disrespected. But I'm getting out and I've decided I'm done with all of that. I want to live freely from now on.

- Jamoni

From The Beat: We all have an option of which way we wish to go in life. Saying your previous actions was a result of your father isn't taking responsibility for the decisions you have made in life whether they're good or bad. You say you done with that stuff and you want to live free from now on. We have only one question? Is that stuff done with you? Be careful of things you say and say it to.

Jail Life

This is jail, so were that young kids like me and you are not supposed to be. When you're in jail the staff is not like your mom or dad so you are not going to get what you want. So you might get mad and bang on your door but that just gone make it BAD and you're going to be in your room thinking about your mom and family and what you did to get in here.

And how you could've stopped from coming in here and why you're in here. Your mom is crying about you being in here. When you visit your mom she tells you that she was crying about you and you go back to your room and think about that.

-De'von

From The Beat: It's all a hurting game both for the prisoner and the family. There's nothing good about being away from those you love. Only you can give them such power over your life.

Being Locked Up

Locked up in this jail got me hella mad! I ain't got no freedom 'cause it got taken. All I got is a punk book. I miss my mamma, and I miss my dad. I can't wait to get to the pad thinking about it is making me mad.

I'm wastin' time in here and I feel like going bad. Waking up to eat some ashh grits, taste worse than the shhh I feed my pits, potatoes smell like hella ssshhh.

I'd rather be at school getting my education, or working hard to reach destination. I know I can do it 'cause I got determination.

-Kwame

From The Beat: We are sure you can do it! That book can be your best friend only if you knew the power that it holds. When your mind is occupied on things other than what you are going through it helps you to learn how to smile in the face of adversity.

One On One

Let's get together for a one on one
We can do anything under the sun
Life man, it's for the fun
It's all right baby we can do it
It's all right, all right with me, it's alright with me
If it alright with you I really want to get to know you
Get a clue of what you about
End your spiritualism
Just for me to get to be around you is a blessing
Yo' mama told me don't be too late
And that you better be in for clock strike two
So we can do anything you want to do
Let's get together for one on one
And when I spit it like this yea when I look into your eyes
I'm seeing such a pretty vice
Like the color red like the color blue
Baby girl you know I love you
You know I need you
You know when I look into your vices
You better tell me what it taste like no fresh in gone
I'm gone be true to main with rain with change
And you can test me if you think that I am wrong
Soakin' wet before you speak to your thugs it's on, it's on, it's on.

-Tyrell

From The Beat: With practice you can't do nothing but get better. Stay crossing your T's, dotting your I' s and you'll eventually score an "A".

When You're Away

Q-vole Beat, this your homeboy Chikillo. Today I'm gonna write about when you're away. When I'm away from my house it feel messed up because it ain't the same being in other places. It's better to be at your house so you could do anything you want.

Sometimes they ask my mom or my girl where I'm at and they said I'm on vacation with my other cousins or homeboys, and I love my family. When I get back home I'm gonna hug my loved ones and go with my girl to different places and have fun. Well Beat this vato is out.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: What are you going to do to stay out of that place once released so you want ever have to worry about feeling such sickening pain ever again?

I'm Tired of Hustlin' (Part 1)

I'm tired of hustlin', I'm tired of livin' this life.
It's getting old.
People getting cold, and things just ain't the same.
Everything just seems to change
time going by fast and I don't want to spend the rest of my life in institutions.
My mom's missin' me, and I'm missin' her,
I'm just tryna do my six months and stay to myself
'cause I'm gone have to get wiser.
Sometimes I be in my room stressing
on how I lost my brother to these streets and why I play wit guns,
and being so shady towards enemies,
I'm just gone do me and keep my head up 'till my time's up
and keep writing in The Beat.
Peace, that's all I gotta say 'till next week.

-Damani

From The Beat: Jail can make you realize these special things that you want in your life. You just got to remember that in which matters the most to you once you are free and back in the mist of these streets. It's so easy to forget your way in this confusing life.

I Win All the Time

I win all the time, mostly because I'm active on the streets. Ninjas always trying to get at me, but I win, they bust. I bust, but I like to handle things in a different way. Like when I rap. I win in the rap battle because I got flows, but right now I'm not winning because I'm locked up in the hall and going to CYA, and I call that losing.

- Baby Whoday

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with having a winning attitude for that's the height in having confidence. You'll go a long way in this world if you were to just believe in yourself.

I Can't Wait

Q-vole Beat? This is Chikillo from Oakland. Well, I'm still here doing time, but you know I'm just gonna do my time so I could get out and go with my girl and homies to kick it like we used to. But I'm tired of being in here in this unit with this little kids, because all they do is talk but don't do nothing.

But I'm just waiting until they come pick me up to go to R.O.P. because I'm sure I'm not coming back to the hall. I'm just gonna stay out and be with the homeboys and my girl because I miss my freedom and my girl a lot. Well beat, to all my homeboys out there in the hood, keep your head up.

-Chikillo

From The Beat: The halls can be depressing at times or should we say all the time. What can you do in the mean time to occupy your time.

They, They Wonder

Yes, I do got little cousins that wonder were I am and I do wonder what my grandma tells them. I try not to think about that stuff 'cause it just brings more stress to me while I'm in the hall.

I just do my time and keep it solid, straight up. My cousins are 6 and 8 and I just got a newborn, so if I keep coming to the hall what kind of example am I setting?

-Demaurija

From The Beat: What would you tell a daughter or a son who has lost their father to incarceration? Would you tell them the truth or would you lead them astray for the well being of their mental capacity? It's time for you to be a role model to them. They will look up to you for sure.

Locked Up On Violation

When you get out of the hall on your first case on probation and then get violated knowing you were just having fun while you out doing no crimes or nothing, is kind of stressful. It's like you learned your lesson. Then going back in for a violation of smoking is like if you're being booked in.

You can't think of what you did like the first time because you didn't do nothing to nobody. The second time, you were just having fun because you're young and you want to live it to the fullest. You really ain't getting no younger.

So, I know how my goons feel locked up on violation. Get out and forget about them other ninjas if they ain't yo trill peeps, feel me! The ones doing hella crimes, stop doing what you're doing, but I can't tell the next ninja what to do to get money, that's all I gotta say.

-Lil' Wayne

From The Beat: The system is kind of messed up like that. Once you have entered it, it is so hard to get out of it. Struggles come with life so the struggle of the system is small compared to some of the other challenges that we face each and everyday. Keeping a positive mind will always uplift you in your times of low.

"Say No"

Learn to say no
Even when you pressure
Because it's for the better
If you feeling stressed just write a lil' letter
And it will make you feel better
Like instead of sittin' on metal you'll be sitting on leather
Make good choices
Never fall in the poison
Jus ride smooth through your life like some lotion
Just tell your bro' to say "NO"
And if you feel stressed out just blow
Don't let people get in your brain
'Cause one day you get so
Pressured you'll go insane
Jus do what you do and
Get your dough
And learn how to say
"NO"

-Go Diego Go

From The Beat: Have you ever felt this kind of pressure? And as you got older, was it easier to avoid it? When you look around you, do you see a lot of peers who have a hard time saying "no" when a group comes together?

When You're Away

When I am away at Juvenile hall my mom tells all my friends that come to my house looking for me that I am in Juvenile hall. And the same for my family…Well, except my little cousins. And when I get out and go see my little cousins, it is hard to explain where I was at when they ask me, 'cause I want to try to set a good example for them, so they don't ever come here like I did, because this isn't a good place for kids.

So I think of something really fast and just tell them that I got in trouble and I had to stay home or something. And I hate to lie to them because I remember when I was little my dad left me and my sister and my mom and never came back. And I remember asking my mom everyday where my dad was at and she always told me he was coming back that day. But finally, my older sister heard me asking my mom and when I got to my room my sister told me what really happened with my dad and that he was never coming back.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Let's hope no more people in your family go back to jail for we don't need anymore children lied to and most off all we don't need anymore broken hearts from the effects of a jail cell.

J-Cats

What's going on with these phonies and fakes
Always lying out the mouth but their game ain't awake
These cats always talk about shhh they don't got
No one knows them in the 'hood 'cause they don't post on the block
I don't even know why I waste time on these cats
Always talking loud shhh like they hit harder than bats
Although they really soft and artificial like juice
Talking about guns that they never let loose
Stop Internet thugging, we don't mess with all that
All I'm living is real, I'm a true known fact.

-Gumby

From The Beat: Those who are solid don't have to prove that they're solid, because it's in their character, attire, and their style. If you're real it'll show. If you're living your life worried about what everyone else is saying, those aren't characteristics of being real.

When I'm In The Hall

When I'm in the hall
I look at the ceiling
And the walls wishing
I would've been doing
What I was suppose to
So I wouldn't be here at all

While I'm laying
On this little bed
I'm thinkin' about
How many tears my mom shed

But while I'm in the hall
I think about what I'm going to do
When I get out
So I won't have to
Come to the hall
At all.

-Frenzy

From The Beat: That's the way a real G is suppose to think. Make your mother happy when you get out of here and don't forget here at The Beat is where you heard it.

No Role Model There

No role model there, so I'm here
Pops went away so I'm scared
Mom's tryna help me but I'm having strange thoughts of some thangs I done did
And why I live like this
I go deep in my pieces
It's like I'm swimming in the beaches
And I hang wit' the beasts
I'm a pill poppin' animal, dro smoking king
If you want a match, let's go to the ring
Do yo' time and stay out of jail and that's coming from me.

-Damani

From The Beat: Don't want to be like the rap industry, do your own thing and have a distinguish style. We all have heard the killer talk before and it's really starting to get boring. Can you flip the chapter? We know you are serious about making big changes, best to you!

I'll Go To Vietnam

If I had a one-way ticket to anywhere, I would go to Vietnam even though I've been there twice. The reason I wanna go there is because it's my home country and that's where I was born.

When I'm there I hope that I can see my grandma' and family. I would also see the great thing of my country home has to offer.

I also wanna become the history of my country and learn how we came to be. I always dream one day to get out of this place, and return to a place where it's calm and where I feel relaxed.

If I go to Vietnam, I would want to go the places like the mountains because it's peaceful and I can think. I'll go to places where I can see the beauty of my country and what I represent.

I love my country because it has a lot to offer and I would like to go and explore what my country have to offer and what surprises lie ahead.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: There's nothing wrong with loving where you're from. Have you ever thought about things you can offer your country in return for what it offers you? If you can change one thing about your country what would it be? And if you only had one word to describe your country what would you say? Hey Vietnam is full of natural beauty, tell us about it? Good choice!

This song is dedicated to Ruben A.

Rest in Peace with all my heart.
Aqui estoy thinking about you Tio. (Here I am thinking about you uncle)
Every time you cross my mind tu sabes que me aguito(you know that I get sad
I remember when we used to kick it and have a blast
It's hard to believe that was back in the past
I remember those times like it was yesterday
If you're here and I was there it all be the same way
I never thought we have to go through anything like this
I just sit back and say," Rest in Peace."
All the homies got your name tattooed behind their backs and necks
And some in their chest and arms just to show you respect.
Simon Tio(fa sho uncle) you're in our mente(mind) all the time.
Tu eres mi tio(you are my uncle) and you will never stay behind
Rest in Peace Ruben A., mucho amor y respeto (Much love and respect).

-Chikillo

From The Beat: Show him how much that you mean what you say by putting your words into action and know he's always looking down on you as a star do with the night. Do you go and visit him often at his grave sight?

To My Own Island, Fiji Island

If I had a one-way ticket I would go to my own island, the Fiji Islands. This place is so beautiful that water is a clear blue, palm tree all around, beautiful beaches. When I'm there, I'm gonna enjoy it and take a vacation away from all the stress.

When you're there, all your mind is free. I want to find a cute female there too. I want to chill in a hotel and eat good food that's my dream.

-Kash

From The Beat: It sounds very relaxing and tasty! That in which you dream can very much become your reality if you wanted it to. The first is asking yourself, "how can I get to that special place?" Don't forget to send us some pictures.

Will Never Come Back

When I first came to the hall I was a normal guy that never was scared of nobody in the street. Soon, later on I start thinking about my family the first week when I was here in the hall. This is my first time in here. I wanna go home now. I can't stop thinking about my family. I will be good in the hall starting today now on. I will never come back here again.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: Sometimes it takes us to see for ourselves before we decide what's not right and wrong. If we weren't to bump our heads every once in awhile we wouldn't know that there was an obstacle lying in the way of our life's path. The experiences you go through in life is like your road map that prevents you from driving down "1 way only" destructive streets.

I Want To Go To Nevada

Where I wanna go is to Nevada because that's where my little brother lives. I would get him away from there and move him, his mom, my dad, and the rest of my brothers away from this hellhole of a state and sponds of Cali's finest perp and orange and bananas.

-Unknown

From The Beat: What is it about California that make you feel the way that you do? Why do you think it would be more safer in California than in Nevada? For your info there is violence, drugs, killing and negativity everywhere you go.

Ain't Too Much Changed

What's up with The Beat? I'm still in here. You still coming here. My ninja got out and can't came back. My other ninja doing nine months in Alameda.

Mom is a'ight, my cousin out their thuggin', Pops... I don't sucking know. And everybody else out their doing them. Since I got locked up, ain't too much changed.

-Lano

From The Beat: Okay, so little has changed on the outs since you got locked up, but what has changed on the inside? Meaning, has anything changed about your outlook and about your plans for your future?

Real

What's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Wink! I just want to talk about being real!

To me, being real is stay true. Keep yo' shhh real and don't be fake. You know a lot of people call themselves real, but me, I let other people tell me that. But I'm out mayne.

-Wink

From The Beat: Do you think your ideas of what it means to be "real" will ever change? Can you imagine a time when what you think is real today won't be what you think is real tomorrow?

One-Way Ticket To...

If I had a one-way ticket to anywhere, I'm straight to Puerto Rico. I'm going straight to the honeycomb hideout with all the fam bam and live the good life. I chose this place 'cause it's dummy females and enough money around to feed the team.

-Joe Dirt

From The Beat: Well, if you have a family haven with enough money for all, then you should find a way to get there. Have you been to PR? It's really beautiful! (Next time, you'll have to give us more than just three sentences. Next time, write to the bottom of the page!)

Where Is My Dad Story

I have a little daughter at home. She's the only one who don't understand me, and her mom try explaining to her what's going on. But she cries her heart out. It makes me mad I can't be there for my baby.

It makes the momma cry when I'm not there and it hurts the baby. It made me mad when I didn't see my dad. I love my baby and my baby's momma so much, I want my baby to know who her father is.

-Anthony

From The Beat: We can understand why you want to be home to be your baby's father. But when it makes you mad that you can't be there, who are you mad at? Who has the power to make the decisions that will keep you at home? It's in your hands...

I'm About Out

Man, I'm lightweight mad because I was supposed to get out last week, but the lady that was coming back to see me was sick last week so she didn't show up. But, she is coming this week so I should get out this week, and I'm excited.

So yeah Beat, I will be hollerin' at y'all when I get out 'cause I do need a job... Oh, and I wanna say wha's good with my lil' bruhs in here and to my ninjas. Y'all know who y'all is. I'm that fly, short girl and I'm out.

-Joann

From The Beat: You are out, and you are at The Beat. So all of you who get angry when things don't happen as fast as you want them to, just remember that things change, and patience can be a virtue.

Untitled

If I had a one-way ticket I will go to L.A. While being out there, I go to Disneyland, Magic Mountain, and go to a lot of USC games. Then I'll go to the dirt bike tracks and the ATV stores out there and have the time of my life with my cousin R, my mom and other family members.

-LA Bound

From The Beat: We changed your Beat name, because the one you chose represents turf, and is not appropriate. Does your mom live down there in LA, or are you talking about going down there with her? Have you been to LA? What did you like most about it?

When I'm Away

When I'm in juvenile, my mom tell my little brother that I'm spending the night at a friend's house. And when I get out, I tell little bra that I was at a friend's house, too, and just go along with the lie, so my little brother won't grow up and make the mistakes I made, chu-feel-me?

-Doddie

From The Beat: We feel you, but it's not enough to keep him from following in your footsteps. At some point, he will know he is being lied to, and he will look at what you are doing as his model, not at what you are telling him. So, if you don't want your little brother to do it (whatever "it" is), then don't do it yourself.

Painting

The art that blows my mind is the art that I create with my very own paintbrush. Most people know that I'm a painter and it helps me get through life. The first time I got my paintbrush I was ten, and since then I've been painting ever since.

-Jr R

From The Beat: Well, we're glad you have our art. Of course, we took out the last lines of this piece for reasons which you already know.

My Family Knows

I only been to the YGC once, and I'm the youngest in the family, so all my family knows I'm in YGC. My main family — as in my mom, grandma, sister, and auntie — they try to tell my other family that I'm not home. But my other families hardly come to my house, so they wouldn't notice I'm gone.

Like my cousin who's been to juvy back in the day five times and nobody knows except for his main family. No other family member been in jail and my father left not too long ago, when I understand what's going on.

-Andy

From The Beat: You say nobody knows about your cousin being in the hall five times... but you know... We hope that once is enough for you to come to YGC because once you start down that well-worn path of in and out, it gets harder and harder to turn things around. We don't understand what you mean about your father leaving and what it is you understand.

One Way Ticket

If I was offered a one-way ticket to anywhere, I would go to Atlanta because I like their colleges. My mom tells me there's family out there. I hope to see a lot of thick females there and beautiful parts of Atlanta.

Sometimes I just want to get away because I'm tired of the police and some of these haters out here.

-Swizzy

From The Beat: We've been to Atlanta, and it's a very nice city. But you can find haters (and thick females) everywhere, so in the end, it's up to you who you associate with and what you do with them.

When You're Away

When I come to the hall, I think about all of my family and friends. I always tell them that I go out of state. And when I get back from "Out of State" all of the little kids that missed me run up to me and gives me all types of hugs and kisses. That means a lot to me because that means I'm loved.

They all ask me where I've been and I tell them I've been in Texas. Sometimes it's easy to tell them, but most times they ask too many questions. But I can't wait to get home. I miss everyone.

-J

From The Beat: No matter how much you miss them, have you thought how much they miss you? Not just the feeling when you're not there, but what they're actually missing from your absence — your love, your guidance, your instruction. It's time for you to return the love you feel when you get home by never again doing the things that take you from them.

Come On Beat, Make More Effort!

My name is Cathy aka Giggles. I have been writing The Beat for a year now. I want to start out by saying I appreciate what ya do, and the fact that you guys come to our units.

I wrote two poems to The Beat about two months ago, and I still haven't seen my work. I wrote four poems a month ago, and still I haven't seen them. I am very upset at this. You need to step yo' game up because I'm getting frustrating not seeing my work I worked hard for.

Please Beat, make more effort to put the poems out there.

-Giggles

From The Beat: It takes a long time to put a Beat together, and we can use all the help we can get. (Hint, when you get out of here, why not come help us?) But sometimes, you just have to be patient. The issue that will soon be in your hands (13.16) has four of your poems: one POW, two CO-POWs, and two standouts! Not bad!

RIP T-Weez

On 3/9/08 the world lost a very good person, TLW. He got shot seven times. I'm still recuperating from his loss, and I know he would want me to keep my head up. But bruh, it's hard man. I was just with my brother, so it's hella hard. They say bullets got no name, but brothers got no aim. RIP Weez.

-Elgin

From The Beat: How many more of these tragically sad RIPs will there be? How many more will have to go through what you're going through? How much more pain will y'all put on each other in this deadly, stupid war?

I Miss You

When I'm away, it's really nothing I can say.
I wanna go home to stay. It seems like I'm far away.
I wanna be with him but there's no way.
Every day I cry 'cause I didn't wanna say good-bye!
They took you away from me and I can't see why!
Can you come back to me and be in my life?
Tell me you love me and one day make me yo' wife?
I wanna be with you to the day I die!
I put that on my mama, that ain't no lie!
I miss you so much, I don't know what to do.
I think I'm losing my mind 'cause I really wanna be with you.
I'ma hold you down, yeah, I'ma be around.
I'ma still be here but the question is you gon' be where?
Are you gone love me like I love you?
Or you gone play games like were two?
Naw, I ain't ready for the games!
I'm ready to change my last name!
When I'm away from you, I don't know what to do!
I miss you!

-Kia

From The Beat: So, do you miss this person enough to never come back here? If the answer is yes, what is your plan? If you don't have a plan, someone else will make one for you...

The Beat Within

I would buy a one-way ticket to Tokyo, Japan, from watching TV and movies about it. It seems like a cool city. It's the fashion capital of the world. It's big car country.

-Israel

From The Beat: You mean it makes a lot of cars... but most of them aren't big. Besides fashion and cars, what else do you think would fascinate you about Japan? You could write a whole lot more than just these three sentences!

On My Line

What's good with The Beat? Me, I'm chillin', but the DA like he on my line an' stuff. I ain't trippin', though. They really ain't got nothing on me. That's why they trying to get me out of here to 850, but I ain't hearing it, straight up, 'cause that's gonna mess up the chances of me getting a job. And I really ain't feeling that either, 'cause that's gonna make me wanna do da same thang I did to get in here. I think that's why hella brothers constantly get locked up over and over.

But my attorney bringing in hella people to help me get out. The DA wants me at county or YA, and I really ain't feelin' the YA thang. But, dipset, I'm out.

-Young Dunny

From The Beat: You may feel like doing whatever it was that got you here, but if you act on that feeling, then expect the system to react just as it did the first time. Expecting anything different is foolish or insane. So, if you beat this one, don't get a next one...

Can't Leave It Behind

It's every man for himself 'cause ninjas and the streets is dirty
Too many homies done passed so I'm pouring out my whole forty
Fools say they know me and down fo' me
But when push comes to shove what have ya done fo' me
That's not a question homies, I'm saying it as real talk
If you're running 'cause it's chasing you, don't be a sucka and walk
Real ninjas ain't gotta prove nothing when they
Get tested they respond, not react
Yo' enemies stab you in the front while
Yo' own patnas stab you in the back
And just like that smoke and drank is burning my throat
Raised my whole life in the 'hood so you know I'm cutthroat
51/50 insane thoughts through my brain
I got murder in my mind
Turn the clock backwards 'cause I can't leave shhh behind

-Giggles

From The Beat: We're not sure who you're trying to impress by being the "bad cutthroat" you seem so proud of being, but the only thing that impresses us that whatever talents and skills you have, you've allowed yourself to be nothing more than someone's prisoner, being told what to do and when to do it. Forget about sharpening those street weapons, and start concentrating on sharpening your mind. It's the only thing that will keep you free. Unless you make that transition, you'll just be a paper gangster, writing your gangster longings from behind four walls!

What It Do

Wha's up with The Beat? This yo' boy Sobolo holding it down fo' the block, feel me, unlike some fake-ass ninjas up in here snitching and shhh.

I don't know why I'm up in this shhh. My case ain't even that serious. I got the homies in the other units, and they in here fo' some stupid shhh. They never learn they lesson.

I'm tryin' to get up out of here, and when I get out I think I might change… Psych!

When I get out, I'm gonna smoke me a blunt. That's if I get out. I hope one day that these weak-ass halls get shut down so I can do stuff I really want to do. I really hope me and my homies never come back to this place when we get outta here.

All I got to say is what it do with the homies that locked up in here.

-Sobolo

From The Beat: So, you're holding it down for the block, even though the block is nothing more than a tiny piece of real estate that you don't own, and that hasn't made your life easier. It's not rocket science… if you're not going to change, then you're not going to change the consequences either. And, if you really don't know why you're here, then it's pretty obvious you'll be coming back (since you apparently don't know what you have to stop doing to avoid that fate).

Can't Wait

I feel bad because I'm not at home with my family, and my PO is not trying to let me go home no time soon. I hope they let me get back soon, so I can go back to be with my brother and sisters.

I hope to go back to school and catch up with my grades, so I can graduate from the 12th grade. Right now I'm like, I can't wait for that day to come. I'm out.

-Gat

From The Beat: Well, it sounds like you already know that whatever you did that led you away from your brother and sisters, and took you out of school, it wasn't worth it! We hope you keep the promise you make here, because graduating is like a key, and without that key, many doors will remain locked.

One Way Ticket To The 'Hood

I choose the 'hood because it be popping so hard it's like once you go there you don't want to leave and the females — it's so many you don't know where to start. To all behind the wall, inhale and exhale, shake yo' head if you have to until I see you again.

-Curt Co-B

From The Beat: We took out your attempts to talk about your spot, and we're disappointed that your imagination seems limited to what you already know. How boring!

God's The Judge

It's up to me, myself and God if I we live or die. If God wants me to die, I'm gonna die. God makes the last call. You think the judge makes the last call? God makes the last call, so whatever happen gonna happen behind God.

I can't really do nothing 'cause it's too late. It's no use to change my life because my enemies wanna kill me. It's new beef and old beef beginning since the '90s, beef since before us, big homies beef, beef that started before me. My generation started beef, the generation before me started the beef, the generation under me started the beef. It's always gonna be beef.

-De'andre

From The Beat: Is God one of your enemies? We ask because it seems like you're doing everything to defy God's laws, and then saying God has your back. How can that be? Do you owe anything to God? If you have no control over your life, then why do you think so many young black men are dying long before their life spans are over? Is that part of God's plan? Why would He hate on young black men more than on young whites? Aren't you just finding an excuse to avoid your own responsibility for your own choices? God may be the final judge, but don't you give Him the material on which to judge you? Or is that out of your control, too?

A Few Minutes Of My Mind

What blows my mind is the cholo art because it reminds me of my 'hood and the way my life goes on 'cause the family stays in the 'hood chaos — homies, low-lows, the life of my Latin ghetto. So sick of how my people grows. See a little homie, help the little vato 'cause in these ghetto streets there's no mercy living the 'hood life.

The things that hurt the most are the RIPs all over my 'hood, young vatos trying to run the streets, but not even care about their families.

So this vato is going out, be gone but don't forgotten. I'ma be back, homie.

-Gs

From The Beat: We had to change your name because it belongs to another Beat writer from YGC… But we like the things you wrote about how hard it is with all the drama. But when you say you'll be back, we hope you don't mean you'll be back here because this is no place to be!

One-Way Ticket

I would go to Florida so can get away from all the stuff that's dragging me down. I want to get far across from the negative people that are dragging me into stuff I don't want to be a part of.

I would also buy me a house in Miami. Then I'ma go to Opa Locka County and hang with my thug Brisco. Then I'll slide to Dade County and hang with my folks Plies and Rick Ross.

-Beat Name

From The Beat: Well, you've got a pretty original Beat name… But let's get this straight, you want to go to Florida to get away from bad influences, but you want to hang with your "thug" in one county and your folks in another? The point is, there is no place on earth where dirt doesn't exist, so, in the end, it becomes your responsibility to avoid it, wherever you are. We hope you can.

My Ways

It's my first time writing to you. It's my first time in the hall. I'm going to tell you something that no one has heard from my mouth: I'm sorry for my evil ways.

This is my first and last time coming to the hall. I have people watching for me out these doors. But there's someone inside these doors that I'm living behind: that's my baby's daddy and mijo, you know I love you. And I'm going to wait for you and your baby is going to be waiting for you, too.

-Looney

From The Beat: Expressing regret is a big deal and recognizing that you have ways that you want to change is a serious step to growing up – it doesn't even happen for some people ever.

Life Sucks

When life gives you lemons, then make lemonade. But lemons can be rotten, just like lemonade can be too sour or too sweet.

That's in my case whenever I do bad, I get in trouble and when I do too good, I can start getting into trouble. That's why life sucks, but if it didn't suck, then what would be the point of living? Why would God make Heaven if we are living it.

So try to make the best you can of life, even though I keep getting wrapped up in the rotten sour stuff. You have a chance.

-Little Man

From The Beat: Good point! You also have the same chance we all have. Life turns to be whatever you plan it to be. If your life is going the direction it's going, is because you want it go this way. It's time for you to switch directions, one way. Old way or a different one! It's your choice!

My Court Date

Well Beat, I recently had court. It was going well for a while. I was going to have permanent release on May 8. Until this guy comes out of the cuts and he says he objects. He says he's not too sure he wants me to go home because I have a huge file on runaway cases and he thinks my mom will take me away when she moves.

Right then I wanted to crack him, so I would have broke his jaw. That fool pissed me off so bad, man.

Well I have court on the 22, of April. Hopefully everything goes well. Peace.

-Porky

From The Beat: Let's see what happens? If you get this chance, what are you going to do differently? Are you willing to participate with the probation conditions they might set up for you? Why are you running away from your problems? You may run all your life, but the only things you are doing is making things more complicated in your life. As for wanting to sock someone, work on that rage, before it washes you!

Missing My Familia

Damn it's that I haven't seen my family for three weeks, even though I see my jefe when she visits, I still miss her. I miss my two nephews and my niece. I hope I didn't let them down. I hope I get out already, so I could make up the time I missed out on them. I miss my carnala and my cuñado. I didn't appreciate what I had when I was in the outs, but now that I'm in here, I just want to go back into time and spend more time with my familia. I just want to say that I am really sorry and I hope they could forgive me.

-Chunky Monkey

From The Beat: Realizing how important your family is to you is a big step for getting your priorities in order and a motivation to stay up and out. Now realizing what it's like to be locked up, maybe spending Friday night in with the fam will seem like a great idea when you're out.

One-Way Ticket To Hawaii

If I had a one-way ticket, I would go to Hawaii. I would take my Mom, my lil' sister, and my grandma. I want just to relax and watch the people run around, especially the girls. I would like to go there because the beach makes my feel free. I would go there to spend time with my family.

-Macias

The Beat Within: When you were on the outs, did you go to the beach a lot? There is something special about Hawaii's beaches. The water is clear and warm. We hope you get to go

Worrying About My Man

I can't believe I'm here again! I forgot how it feels to be behind locked doors! It sucks.

I miss my man Abraham so much! And all my family! I want to do good now and get off probation! But its hard, I took the first step by turning myself in, I wish my boyfriend would follow my footsteps, but that guy just does whatever he wants to.

I get really upset with him sometimes and I don't know what to do. He is also on the run, doing bad. I try to be a good example and tell him to do good and stop drinking and whatnot. But he says he doesn't care and does whatever!

I get so frustrated I don't know what to do! I love him so much and just want the best for him! I been with this loser on and off since I was twelve, it seems over the years he just gets worse. I don't want him to end up in prison or anything like that. I just stress so much off him. This guy is the love of my life, if he keeps this up I'm gonna start getting gray hairs! I don't know how to help him but I want to so bad!

-Cuen

From The Beat: Sometimes you have to just stop trying to save certain people because they can only save themselves. You sound like you spend a lot of time and energy on this person – but what does he do for you?

What Keeps Me Up At Night

The feeling I might die at any moment,
the shadows of darkness
closing in on me
all the time,
and when I see a weird figure in the dim of a shadow.
Almost anything can keep you up at night,
scary thoughts,
a good day,
the next day,
or nervous about the first day of school.
But what does anyone care if they get kept up at night?
I try to think oh well tomorrow will be another day.
This will all be over soon just don't think,
hold your breath 'till you pass out,
or just take a pill to make you fall asleep.

-Lil' Man

From The Beat: It sounds like you are not enjoying this place at all. Well, we hope tomorrow to be a better day for you?

Go Back

Where would I go, if I could go anywhere: I will go back to Tulare County. Because that's where my love lives. I miss going to the Farmer's Market. I miss cruising around. I just wish I could go back and had stayed.

-Ulloa

From The Beat: It is refreshing to here a young person write about something positive like a Farmer's Market. Next time, maybe you can write more about your good memories.

When I'm Away, I Still Think Of You

Today I'm going to write about when I'm away from my family and my lady.

Anyways, I been locked up for a cool minute now. Since I been here it seems like each day that passes me by I keep missing my family and my lady hella more.

If I would never have bounced out form my ladies pad, then I wouldn't be here right now. I feel hella bad for leaving her like that.

The other day, I went to court and seen my older brother and my little nephew. Damn, when my brother waved to me I felt hella bad because he shouldn't have to wave to me from behind a courtroom door. When I saw my nephew running around I started to cry. Man, I hella miss him. He's hella cute. I can't wait until I'm out so I could be with my lady and the rest of the Brady Bunch. LOL.

For real though, I'ma do good next time I'm out. I hate the feeling of being sad all the time. It's cool though cause I called them the other day and I talked to my lady, my brother and my sister. When I made that phone call that made me feel hella better. I'm supposed to get a visit from them soon – I'm just waiting for that day to come.

Well till I get out, I'm gonna always be thinking of my lady, my brother, my sister-in-law and my little nephew. My sister is also three months pregnant. I hope everything goes well for her. I'm hella happy that she's pregnant. No matter where I get sent, I'm gonna come right back to see the baby. Well I'm all out of time so till pencil meets paper. To all in here keep your head up and stay true.

-M

From The Beat: M, you are talking a lot of big game here about doing well and missing your family. But what do you think you need to do to really be there for them?

The Irish Rule!

One of many places I would like to go is to Ireland. In my mind all I can see is vast hills of green, small towns, great people, and even better beer. Now this is not just a dream. I'm going to CYA soon, but when I get out at the age of twenty, I'm going to see my country, the place of my family…

I've see many photos of one of the most beautifulist countries in the world, and if I'm only going one way to Ireland, then that's cool with me.

-Slow Cooker

The Beat Within: Don't do anything in CYA that you shouldn't (especially fight, which automatically adds six months every time), because twenty is the perfect age to be able to enjoy what Ireland has to offer. Good luck.

Dedication to Alexis and Alejandra

Hey baby I just
Want to tell you
That I love you and
I want to dedicate
This lil' poem to you

Tu sonrisa es
Mi vida nunca
Me dejes amor.
Te amo.

The end.

-Gato Madre

From The Beat: What a beautiful love poem to the two most important women in your life! We're sure they love you just as much as you love them. We hope you get to see them soon!

Art That Blows Your Mind

The art that has blown me away is some of Michael Orozco's. The way his images speak as words, and that you could read the image like the book. You could feel his pain.

-Jesse

The Beat Within: We agree with you, Jesse. With think Michael Orozco was the greatest artist we've ever featured in The Beat, and he and his art will be seriously missed. (We only published one of the three pieces you submitted, Jesse, because the other two were only one or two sentences each. We need more than that. Just choose one topic, not all three, and write as much as you can about it.)

Plan Is To Be Good

When I get released I'm going to be good. And talk to the little ones about how it is in juvy hall so when they get to be my age they won't do the same mistake that I did, and also they won't feel the pain that we went through every court we had to go. And here [it's] something you don't want to and be away from the ones you love the most. It feels like something that's eating a part of you from the inside.

-M-R

From The Beat: We're glad you have the experience to give such good advice to young people about what it's like to be locked up. It's painful to be away from your family and the way you describe it is raw and real. We hope you get to go home soon but that you don't forget what it feels like to be locked up.

La Vida Por Mis Ojos (Life Through My Eyes)

I had no idea Juvy would be so terrible. I though it would be more fun, just chillen with my homies, but it ain't. It's all what I least expected.

Now I just want to go home with my mom and dad, 'cause back then I used to want to come here, but now I regret coming here. I felt sad and alone, and all I want is to go back home with my friends, family, and especially won't do what I did to come back here.

I always thought I wouldn't never get caught by the cops, but now I've learned my lesson, and I just wanna go home.

-Lil' Sleepy

From The Beat: We're happy to hear this from you. Good thing is that now you know what this life will take you to if you continue acting the same way you were. What are your plans now after getting back home? What do you have in mind to keep yourself out of trouble? What was the lesson?

Maybe New Orleans

I've never been to any other state before in my life and I think that's sad because a lot of kids these days been everywhere.

If I had a round trip ticket out of California, I'd probably go to New Orleans. Why? Because I've heard it's a wonderful place. I don't want to hear I want to see for myself. They have very fun Mardi Gras parades that are very interesting. Then I want to go because Lil Wayne the rapper is from there and he is my favorite rapper of all time. Last but never least is that I want to see how the progress of the rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina is coming. It was a horrible period in the past couple years, but they'll make up for the lost time and activity. So yep that's where I was to go on my round trip ticket out of California.

-Sephina

From The Beat: These all sounds like amazing reasons to go to New Orleans. Traveling and combining it with educational or volunteer work makes being a tourist so much better. Don't forget about this little dream you wrote down and we bet it will come through.

Not A Place To Go

When I go away for a month or more, my sisters would already know where I'm at, and that's the hall. Right now, my little sister know that I'm locked up, but she doesn't know that I'm going to the ranch.

I know when I get out they would ask me question about the ranch because it's my first time going. When I get out, I would tell them it's not a place to go.

Well, that's all until next time.

-Jr

The Beat Within: We hope your sisters listen to what you will tell them. But one thing for sure, they will watch what you do more than hear what you say, and they will follow whatever they see you doing. So think about what you do, and ask yourself if you want them to do it too. If not, don't do it.

Traveling Plans

Hey what it do females and males?

Well I want to speak on traveling.

But first of all I want to introduce myself. My name is Luis. I am gonna be 18 on July 24 and my plan is to work, save money, and then travel the world.

I'm gonna try to go to every state in every country and just take my daughter and wife and then come back to San Jose and buy me a house and watch my family grow.

The end.

-Gato-Madre

From The Beat: This sounds like a great life plan Gato-Madre. What states do you not want to miss and why? It's probably going to take a while to travel all 50 (including California!) states but imagine all you'll see and experience! Make sure to fill The Beat in on your travels.

My Homie Sleepy

My homie sleepy is a cool person me. I met him in here. When we were roommates, we were on A level, but we'd still bang on our doors or our toilets when there was noise riots. I didn't think we deserved to be on A level but hell with it. It was fun while it lasted.

-Porky

From The Beat: Do you think you deserve to be in this place?

Puerto Rico

I would like to go to Puerto Rico again because it's nice to go and swim in the warm ocean water and you eat a lot of fruit and it's good. Plus you can go and travel around it and you meet a lot of people, especially girls.

-Anonymous

From the Beat: Puerto Rico sounds like a great place to visit! Have you ever visited before? Do you have family there? Why did you choose Puerto Rico?

Do Good

Well this is Sleepy from Santa Clara. Well this is going out to all the people who are locked. Do good, stop the stuff that you're doing, be smart about what you're doing, don't run from the Ranch or camp, don't be stupid just like I was saying, be smart, and think about your family,

How do you think your family thinks about you coming to this place? Think about what I'm saying because this place is not fun. You can't see family or the ones you care about. Well just do good and stay safe much love and respect.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Thanks for your concerns. Guys like you are what we need, to help those who are hungry for guidance. What are you going to do to stay free?

Why I'm Here

I'm in juvie for a warrant I thought would go away. I've been on the run for two months with my man Ignacio. I thought being on the run was fun and it was, but I had to turn myself in. I thought I could run away from my problems, but I couldn't. Once I thought about it, I did what I had to do, so that's why I'm here.

-Looney

From The Beat: It seems like you learned a good lesson because you did the right thing and came in to do your time. We imagine that must be hard, especially when you have been with someone you love, doing whatever you want. But coming in now will lead to more freedom later.

Being Away

First off, I've been away from my family and my loved ones and my boyfriend as well. But I'm happy cause my baby boo wrote me. But anyways when I'm away from my family and my baby nephews and nieces my momma tells them that I'm on a vacation or at work. But to everybody that are locked up, keep your heads up and God Bless.

-Keila

From The Beat: Do you think your family believes that you are on vacation or do they know that you are locked up? What will you tell them when you get out? How will you explain where you have been?

I Can't Wait

I can't wait to get out of this place,
So much tension so much hate,
My lady cheated on me, so now I'm all alone,
I miss my baby sister and my girl
I can't wait to go back to the 'hood,
I try not going back to doing the same old thang,
But the streets keep calling me everyday,
I can's wait to get out of this place,
So much tension so much hate!

-Frustrated

From The Beat: We had to edit a few words and cut a line because it's inappropriate for our publication. It's seems like you are having a hard time in deciding which way to go. We suggest you to search for the one that provide you safety and take away the risk of losing your freedom again. Use this time to make a better decision that can fix your life. You know the consequences some actions bring.

RIP Miklo

Well this is Sleepy from Santa Clara well this goes out to my homie Miklo. He was my best friend. We would fight a lot, but we stayed focsued. We were fighters. We would fight everyone, not scared of nothing. Well he better wait for me up there. RIP.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: We are sure that if you keep thinking or acting this way, your way up there might be soon. Is that what you want for your life? Leave the fighting and drama, and move on with a book and pencil! Get into school!!

My Dad's Art Blows My Mind

Well I want to write about art that blows my mind. The art that blows my mind is my dad's art. He did a drawing of himself and his wife and it looks just like them. His wife has on her Myspace page.

He also did this drawing for my mom. It was a lady with a mouse's tail and ears. The reason he drew this for her is because they call her Mousie or Mouse and that art blows my mind gone!

-P-Nut

From The Beat: The way you described this make us want to see it. You are proud of his talent. What skills or talent do you have? The same?

My Lil' Visit to J. Hall

I'm going to start out by saying, "Yep, I'm back in here." It's been a year. I'm now 18, turning 19. Next week, I might be shipped out to Elmwood, but my PO said I can get out on EMP. But the only thing that sucks is being pregnant in here that's what hella sucks. I have two months until I'm due, but I know I'm getting out so that's why I call it my lil visit, because that what it seems like.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Even though it must be hard to be pregnant in juvenile hall because you feel uncomfortable, it must also be a really strong motivation to get out and stay out.

These Walls

These walls can bring you down without words or movement or anything. It can bring you down just by waking up in the morning after a great dream you had about being with your family. It can really hurt you.

-Can't Go Nowhere

From The Beat: Do you like this place? If this place can bring you down, what can lift your spirit up?

How I Feel

I feel like I'm stuck. I thought I was getting out yesterday but my PO is trying to give me a few months. I was feeling happy when I thought I was getting out and then messed up when I didn't.

The time I've been here got me thinking hella hard and stressing. I'm always tripping about how my family been doing 'cause they got problems too.

I just hope they are safe and doing good because we just had some funk in my 'hood. Well aight then Beat, I'm out.

-Bora

From The Beat: You don't have another choice but to accept their conditions and rules. You got yourself into this mess, and now you have to find a way to face it like a young man and deal with this. At least, there are a few months compared to others who are doing years. Be careful with the game you are still playing.

P

My boy P is my old roommate. I came here when he came to Juvi. We got into trouble in here. We had screws so we can tag with, we had a shank, we had a handball to play with and we got in trouble for that.

We still got in trouble. We both got hall time but he gets out in May.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: Why do you need those things for? You can get hurt with the same weapon. Do you know that? Use this time for the better not for the worse. Follow rules, forget breaking them!

Lucky I Guess

Well, I have not lost a family member close to me. I consider myself very lucky. I thank God for what has happened and what has not happened.

Now about getting revenge, that's not me. I don't hold grudges, I can't, no matter how mad somebody gets me.

Now, on the other hand, if I get somebody mad, I will probably apologize - so there is no tension.

-Joey

From The Beat: You are a conciliator. This you share in common with most politicians. And it sounds like you have the capacity for gratitude. Those are two fine qualities. We bet you have more. So – identify your weaknesses and focus on what you need to do to overcome them. You could be headed for good things. Work at it.

A MUST, REVENGE

I think revenge is a thing that is needed. If a homie gets taken out then I will get revenge.

I don't think its possible to live in a world of total forgiveness and no revenge.

For example, lets say a lil youngsta gets into some shhh and gets caught and the guy snitches on him and my homies, and gets them some time, then I am for sure going to get revenge for my homies whenever I see the snitch.

You have to get revenge for your homies 'cause their more than homies, they're your family.

-Speedy

From The Beat: Hmmm, you put them in the same category as family, would your blood family approve? Well ,what you are saying may sound good to those who live the code of the streets, but, in truth it's so much a part of the bigger problem.

This Summer

What's up Beat? Well today I'm not feeling those topics so I'm gonna write about my release date.

I get out on July 30. I'm happy because these months are nothing to me. When I get out I'm gonna try to stay out because I want to be with my lady and my family like the old times before I was on probation and I really miss my lady. But I'm just waiting to get out to be with her like before and I miss my mom and my little sisters.

Well that's all for now this vato is out.

-Monroy

From The Beat: July 30th is only a couple of months away Monroy! Good for you. Loved ones is one of the strongest motivations to stay out of trouble. Cherish your family and your girlfriend because it says a lot about them the fact that they've stuck with you through these hard times. Don't hurt them again because it's clear to us how much they love you. The plan should be to not let the hood suck you in ever again.

I Miss My Baby Mamas

Well Beat I miss my baby mamas. I hella hella miss my baby mamas. Well when I get out I'm going to see my baby and I'm going to say I love you and I'm not going to go back to the Halls.

I'm not going to get you mad baby and I'm going to make you happy now. I'm not going to fight no more. I'm sorry baby for fighting when you told me not to. I'm not going to leave you at home alone no more. I should have listened to you baby. Well baby that's it. I love you baby boo.

-Baby Daddy

From The Beat: You can be sorry all you want but stop getting in trouble. We're glad to hear you mature and try to be a man and take care of your responsibilities. Don't just talk about it be about it. Actions speak louder than words. When you get out show you her and your kid that you can be that man that you're talking about.

When I get Home

When I get home I'm going to take such a long shower because in the hall you get three minute showers and second I'm going to tell my mom and dad how much I love them. Third, I'm going to eat a big homemade dinner.

Fourth, I'm going to blast some beats for a couple hours, just kick it and relax. Fifth, last but not least, lay down in my bed in pitch black darkness listening to oldies until I go to sleep. And the next morning sleep until noon. It's going to feel so good to be home.

-Longing for home

From the Beat: What an awesome plan for getting back home! We truly wish you get to carry out your plan soon. Don't forget to thank your parents again! Once you get that big night of sleep, then it is a must to get busy with your plan to stay out for good!

Checking In

Hey what up Beat? It's ya' boy Big Oso just checking in. Well I went to court today and they said I might be going to Pennsylvania at the end of the month of May, or June.

They dropped my charges on a peace officer and I'm going back to court on my Birthday. I also get a special visit on that day. Well I'm out for now till next time.

-Bis Oso

From The Beat: We're glad to hear that they dropped some of your charges. We hope that you take advantage of the deal they're giving you and get something positive out of this experience.

Africa By Bus

If I had a bus ticket to go anywhere in the world I would go to Africa, to the Africa plains so I could see all kinds of animals like lions, elephants, tigers, monkeys, gorillas.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: What attracts you to Africa besides the animals? Africa is a huge continent and it's very diverse. Do you have any idea what country in Africa you'd visit and why?

Art That Blows My Mind

Outta of all the pictures in The Beats,
I have seen from all past issues
the art from by Micheal Orozco being the greatest.
I mean how can pencil and paper create such things
Because they were created by him.
RIP Orozco!

-Stuck In A Trench

From The Beat: It's unbelievable, but a reality. Do you have any skills like him? Sorry we had to edit your piece to make it a bit clearer.

Just About Love

If there was a chain of forgiveness, I think the community would be a better place, a much better place. No more fights! No more hate! I wish there was such a place. I would live much happier. Why can't some places just be about love?

-Joey

From The Beat: No place is simply one thing. And no one is simply one thing. Life is complicated. Our job on this planet is to minimize the bad things and develop the good. But life will always be about balancing the many qualities that all of us share, by virtue of being human.

Master Piece

I think music is a masterpiece because music creates the world. It creates who we are, and what we like to express.

One-way ticket would be home. I would never go anywhere else besides San Jose.

-Michael

From The Beat: Music is a masterpiece. And it does open up a field of creativity for everyone. What do you like the most about music when you are home in San Jose?

One Way Ticket

If I were given a one way ticket to anywhere in the world, I would give it to my little brother to stay with my grandma outta state, so he wouldn't follow my footsteps, like I followed my older brother.

-Emilio

From The Beat: That's a good idea! But, we still think that he doesn't need to go anywhere if you can change the way you are. What he needs is someone who can teach him good ways, teach him to become a responsible and a man with principles. Give it a try and you'll kill two birds in one shot.

Things I Do In The Hall

What I do in the hall is read The Beat Within, come out, play handball, talk to my ex-lady on the phone, yell out the door when I'm mad, work out for an hour and talk to my roommate. It's pretty whack so just stay out.

-Sleepy

From The Beat: It sounds whack! Do you like it here? Would you come back after experiencing how it is? Of course not, unless you are a fool!

What Do I Owe Myself

Well, I owe myself a lot of my life back because I gave it all away to my ex-lady. I gave her my whole life and everything in it.

I feel so stupid for giving my life to her, thinking she loved me. For her, I even stopped fighting so I could stay out and be with her. Man, I even shared my secrets with her, secrets that I never told anyone, things I regret telling her.

Anyway, I owe myself my life back by leaving her and getting out this place. In a big way, juvenile hall helped me open my head and mind about a lot of things that are good, like going to school and not doing drugs and just finishing my program this time. I know I can do it. I just needed to realize the right thing. This is what I owe to myself.

-Raymond

From The Beat: Bingo! Perhaps you could send us a note from the outs. We love to hear success stories. We love to share them with Beat readers.

She Left Me

Once again I sit here all alone
just to open my eyes and see the steel and stone
out my cell window I see rain from the sky
just to realize it was a tear from my eye
I feel the cold chill me down to the bone
I'm forced to stay here but this cell is not my home
I hear the ring, the metal swinging of keys and metal locks
the scrape of boots upon concrete as guards patrol the catwalks
another day as a cdc prisoner doing time.
I got nothing to lose by my sleep
a gangsta dreaming of love creeps down to my feet
a thug in love only has one destination... to reminisce on
a kiss could only be my imagination.
My girl swore she would wait and never be late.
But came along and she left me at the gate.
Please accept my calls.
The blessing from your voice can't penetrate these walls.
With a piece of paper and envelope infatuated with ink.
The wall and locks got you wondering
what a gangsta like me can think.
It's all a struggle for what you don't see.
Like the song says - somebody please.
But I had a choice and I chose wrong and I got to go on because I gotta be strong.

-Niko

From The Beat: You are a skillful wordslinger. Have you ever wondered what might happen if you were to take your facility with words seriously. We're not talking about becoming a rap star, (although, if that's what you really want, you should pursue it as far as the path leads). We're talking about turning your fascination with words into a profession. Many creative writers start out in journalism. It pays the bills while they work on their novels, or poems or songs. Turn these thoughts around in that big noggin of yours. To become a writer takes training, practice, and dedication. Are you up for it?

Alaska

Today I'm going to talk about what I would do if I had a one way ticket to anywhere. I would go to Alaska. I would go to Alaska because I have family out there and I would be able to stay out of trouble. It would also be a good place to raise my kid and be away from the gangs and stuff. Also it's fun out there, except that it's cold.

-Shrek

From The Beat: These are some great reasons you have for going to Alaska. We like how they're very realistic. Who knows, maybe you should give it a try one day. The most important thing to remember is that we need to make the right choices in our own hearts in order to succeed. Where we live definitely affects us, but it's essential to have inner strength no matter where we are.

When I Was A Young Boy

When I was a young boy my father took me into the city to see a marching band. He said someday you'll grow up and lead the marching band, but instead, I got locked up and now those words have changed.

Yes, he keeps singing those words because he says he still believes in me, and when I heard him say that, it gave me a purpose to live. It also gave me a purpose to get out and stay out, because my family also said they love me and they still have faith that I will get out.

I am gone soon. I'm going to a group home in Sacramento, and when I finish, my family will welcome me back. I thank God that my family is so nice to me. I hear that song everyday when I go to bed, the song I heard when I was a young boy.

-White Boy

From The Beat: This is a good story. You're a lucky guy, to retain the faith and love of your family. And now we want to tell you about a much larger family. We are compelled to do so because of the way you signed your piece. It's a long story that we'll make very short. The human family, that means humans of every description and of every skin color, can be traced, by way of DNA, back to Africa, to the first human mother. Scientists have even given her a name. They call her Lucy. You, White Boy, and all of us, are descended from Africa. When human beings spread all over the earth, depending on where groups stayed for a while, (meaning thousands and thousands of years), those qualities that helped them to adjust to their new surroundings gradually, over many, many generations, resulted in groups with light skin (white), brown skin, yellow skin, red skin, and all kinds of body shapes and eye shapes. But the reality is – we all come – originally – from Africa. The colors of our skin mean almost nothing compared with the quality of the lives we lead and the choices we make. Under the skin, we are, biologically, almost identical. Another Mothers Day has come and gone. Let's tip our hats to the first mother of us all, an African female human being we now call Lucy.

"Don't worry about a thing, cause every little thing is gonna be alright"

If I could go anywhere, I would go to heaven. Because how many people do you think really get to go there? A lot of people in the world wonder what heaven's going to be like. And no one can really tell you what it's like. I want to be able to go to heaven without experiencing death. Because in order to go there you have to die.

But I want to be able to go there on a vacation and then return back to Earth. I think it would be an experience of a lifetime. I think it would be hecka cool to go up there, be able to see my homies and my familia. I would take a picture to show I was there and I would take pictures with my family, my homies, people in history books, and also Jesus and God.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: It's great to see you have such high hopes. We agree—heaven would probably be pretty cool. Any you want to go for the right reasons—to see your family, friends, and The Man Upstairs. This is a fun piece, even with the thought of death. What do you think heaven will be like? Can you give us images?

When You're Away

This is dedicated to the one I love…
When you're away, you don't know how I feel
When you're away, it takes me time to heal
When you're away, I think of you every second of the day
When you're away, I just hope and think you're okay
When you're away, my body starts to drain
When you're away, I start to feel you're pain
When you're away, I don't know what to do
When you're away, I start to act a fool
When you're away, I think on what you told me
When you're away, I know things won't be how they used to be
When you're away, I see right from wrong
When you're away, I reminisce will I sing our song
When you're away, I dream on the day we will be together
When you're away, I still know it's me and you "Always and Forever."

-Lefty

From The Beat: This is real great poetry. The rhymes work out very well. Now, can you translate these beautiful words into beautiful actions? The true poet not only writes like a poet, but lives like one. How can you live out your daily life so that what you write about is also what people see in your actions?

Away from home

When I am away from home I feel alone, thinking of my life.
When I am old and grown, I got my family and my in my mind
I am thinking of them all the time.
My girl, too, she's wishing I will come home soon.
I am going to the Ranch. I got 6 to 8 months I have to pass.
I am trying to get through it hella fast.
I am trying to get through the time to be with my family.
That's why I wrote this rhyme. I will see you next week.

-Pit

From The Beat: Great rhymes! And an even greater message! It's good to have a goal to reach for, and family is always a great one. When you're frustrated, or when you're tempted to give up, think of you're family and let that help you to do the right thing.

When You're Away

When I am away and back down in one of these facilities, I often think about what my family thinks or where they think I'm at. I ask my mom and she tells my nieces that I'm at bad camp or that some people took me to a bad place to be in timeout, where all the other bad people are.

-Bad boy blues

From The Beat: When you are here, do you think you are a bad person? Do you think your nieces or even your mom see the Hall as a place where the "bad" people go? What do you think the general people think? Do you think it's more of people who make mistakes than people who are "bad"? Can you tell us more about this idea?

One-Way Ticket—Home!

If I had a one-way ticket to go anywhere, I would go home because one-way means "ONE WAY." That means no coming back. And you know what: I'm not going to come back.

-Rodrigo

From The Beat: This is one of the most thoughtful responses to the topic. You are absolutely right about it being one way. We believe you when you say you won't come back. How will you live differently to avoid getting a "two-way" ticket?

One Way Ticket To The Ranch

What's cracking Beat? Today's topic is "One Way Ticket." I want a one way ticket to the Ranch.

I want a one way ticket to the Ranch because I want to get out of here and move on with my life so I can finish high school and go to any college that takes me and get bank.

I want to do this because in the long run, if you think about it, you'll make at least three times more money than you would if you don't finish high school.

We'll Beat that's it for this week. I don't think I'm going to be around for the next one because I'm next on the list for the Wright Center. So keep doing what you guys are doing.

-Carlos

From The Beat: You sure have the right goals in mind, Carlos, and we know you'll succeed in them if you make the right choices. It's always good to have the long-run in mind. Encourage those around you to stay up and work hard the way you are, because that will be great for everyone.

To Heaven

If I had a one way ticket to anywhere, I would buy my ticket to Heaven. And I would talk to my stepdad and ask him a couple of questions I never got finished asking him. So that's it. I don't got much to say, but if I could say something to him I would say I love you Sam, and the family is missing you.

I'm back in the hall, going to the Ranch. I'm getting back on track.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: It's makes us glad to see you put the memory of your stepdad first. How are you going to memorialize his life from now on? Maybe you can remember the good person he was by making the right choices in life.

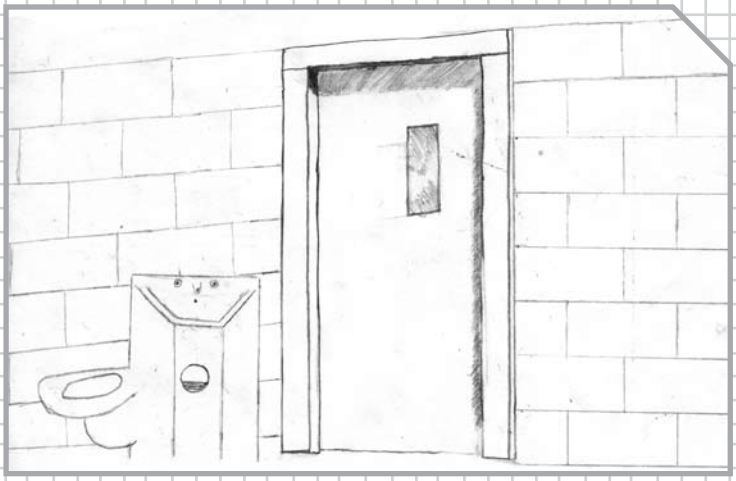
Away From Home

When I am away my family tells my younger family members that I am locked up because I don't like to lie to them. They are not stupid and don't deserve to be lied to. They don't look at me any different.

People can usually tell when I'm away and know that I don't take vacations, so it's hard to lie when people already know me. That's all I got to say for now. This is Larry I'm out.

-Larry

From the Beat: These are good reasons you put forward. Your family can take the truth, and it's right for them to hear it. Hopefully this creates an environment of honesty that will help everyone to be open with each other and to help each other.



Take Me Back To Sunnyvale

One way ticket to Sunnyvale because that where I'm from. And I'd rather still be there. And all the homeboys are going to smoke and drink and kick it. Well I'm out. Late.

-Nino

From The Beat: We know you like to have fun with your homeboys, but keep in mind that to stay in the place where you are, you're going to have to do the right things to stay out of trouble. Have a good time, but don't mess it up so you'll end up in a bad situation.

Where I Belong

My one-way ticket would be right back to my neighborhood with all my homies. Some might not think that's the best idea, but for me it's okay because I can control myself. I got what I need to keep myself out of trouble—like my diploma and a baby on the way. I got people who care about me, but at the same time I can do what it is I do and stay out of trouble because I'm smart about what I do—the way everyone should be.

- Shabby

From The Beat: We are encouraged because you have a diploma and sound ready to handle your new baby. However, do you have any concrete ideas of staying out of trouble? What is it that you do? How will you back up your claim that you can "control" yourself?

Hawaii

If someone were to buy me a one-way bus ticket to anywhere in the world, I would want to go to Hawaii because I know I'd love it. I don't want to live in the same place forever 'cause it sucks. The place that I live in right now is so much trouble. I'm so tired of living this crazy life. The reason why I want to go to Hawaii is that I want to see something nice and lovely and I will have a good time with my family.

-Giang

From The Beat: Hawaii sounds amazing! It's impressive that you have aspirations to go to a place so beautiful. Is there any way that you can make where you live even just a shred more beautiful? Can you tell us why the crazy life is so tiring? Is there anything around here that is "nice and lovely"?

In The Dog House

It's kind of funny when I'm away. My mom tells my little three-year-old sister that the reason I've been gone so long is because my P.O. threw me in a room the size of a doghouse. My sister asks "Why??" She tells her, "No mi porte bien." It truly is sad…

-P

From The Beat: It makes us sad, too, that your little sister has to hear that. We hope that when you get out of this "doghouse" you will be a stronger person, and more ready to care for and protect your family. Can you show your little sister how not to end up in the "doghouse"?

Boring Life

I've been thinking of hella shhh recently, mainly about good grub because the food in here is nothing compared to the food on the outs. Plus, I failed the ranch so I'm doing my time all over again. Hopefully I can do my time and lose my anger. But eventually I will be loose and on the grind again.

-Dominic

From The Beat: We appreciate that you appreciate the little things—like food. Not too many people in here talk about food when they get out. We also appreciate the fact that you acknowledge that you need to get rid of your anger. How can you do that? Exercise? Write? Other ways? We suppose it doesn't matter if the goal is to return top the grind, so we'll see you back in the hall!

Back Off, Back Out

See, I've never been high, but I have been around, and it is real messed up that people will give their lives to the streets and then show up missing. People falling like dominoes.

-Akaram

From The Beat: It's tragic that young men and women disappear and/or give their lives to the streets. How is this happening where you live? Do you have homies who have been lost or killed? What's causing the violence? How is it affecting you? What can anyone, including you, do to make the madness stop?

When You're Away

Hey, what's up, Beat? Q-vo, it's Shyboy. Today's topic is "When You're Away."

Well, every time I get locked up, mis sobrinas (my nieces) always ask for me. I have one sobrina that's four years old and another sobrina that's one. My four-year-old niece is always asking for me, at least that's what mi jefa and carnala tell me. Every time mi carnala y jefa come to visit me, they always tell me que the four-year-old niece always wants to come visit me, too, but they tell her that the cops won't let her in.

I talked to her over the phone about a week and a half ago. She started telling me that she missed me and that she loved me, and a whole bunch of stuff. I started telling her the same. I told her that I couldn't wait to see her so I could hug her.

But, yeah, símon, every time I'm in the halls, my sister tells my sobrina that I'm in jail. My sobrina's name is "Azul"--it means blue. My older sister named her daughter Azul after my mom's name. My other niece's name is Celeste. My sister told me that she can finally walk and that she can talk better. She can say tia (auntie). I told my sister that it was too bad I wasn't there enough for her to learn how to say "tio".

But anyways, I just can't wait to get out. I get out soon. I should take advantage of my chance that I got out. I'm going to spend time con mis sobrinas y mi familia.

-Shyboy

From The Beat: You never write about what it is that compels you so much that you keep getting arrested and sent to juvy, but it's obviously sabotaging your life and messing with your whole family. What do you sisters think about you getting arrested? How do they explain to your nieces why you're so far away for so long? How to you explain it to yourself, when you're alone in your room in juvy? What is so worth your family, your freedom, your fun, your future over and over?

Bat Man

Do the Bat Man dance. Tap the left foot, then the right.
Dust off the home-plate, then swing.
Swing the bat, swing the bat
Do it, do it, do it like that.
Know the Bat Man dance, do the Bat Man dance.
Tap the left foot, then the right, swing homerun
Ohhh it's out of the park.

-The Bat Man Dancer

From The Beat: We looked up the Bat Man dance on Google, so we know what it looks like, but what does it have to do with baseball? We want you to show your Beat workshop how you do the Bat Man dance, whenever you write about it. Okay?

Minds

Great minds discuss ideas
Average minds discuss places
And small minds discuss people
What mind are you?

-Angel

From The Beat: Good question! What's the most profound, funny, and/or original idea somebody has talked about lately, while you were there? Who said it? How did the idea challenge you? What do you talk about? Why don't you write for The Beat next week the idea that has galvanized you the most? How did it change your life, or at least your mind?

The War In Iraq Vs. The War In The 'Hood

The war in Iraq ain't got nothing on the war in the 'hood. We're warring everyday in my 'hood, with AK47 rounds sounding like bombs. I've got to walk to the corner store with my heat every day 'cause the one time I don't, I could end up six feet under. Running around in the streets with the goon squad, ski masked up with the burner gloves on, doing the most. Holding it down for me and my 'hood ain't easy, but it's the only way to get paid and stay alive.

-Heavy Chevski

From The Beat: You're carrying a gun to hold up people, not just defensively, to stay alive. You could end up under the earth, but equally importantly, you could put someone else there. How do you feel about potentially killing someone? Why would you risk his/her life or yours, to get some money from someone that s/he earned and you didn't?

On Thizzle Mountain

You can find me in the party doin the nerd
Stunnas, no lenses, doin' the bird
Sweating hella hard 'cause I popped
On Thizzle Mountain I go, I can't stop
Grill in, blinging tramendo
Stunna boys in the air when I'm hanging out the window
Movin' slow-mo
No, no, can't trick to a chick
I need mo' dough

-Dame

From The Beat: Sounds like you've been listening to Mac Dre and dancing at your party, your grill gleaming, you going hyphy, going dumb. Maybe it's good you have no money, so you'll have to stay away from the chicks who require dough, but have a great time anyway!

Alone Together

There is one person and only one person out there that made me feel this way. I feel so different when I'm with him. It's like me and him are the only people in this right now.

-Christian

From The Beat: What way do you feel with this guy, when you're together? Now that you're alone in juvy, how are you managing without him? How do you influence him? Do you each encourage good things in each other, or not?

An Interview

The Beat: Where do you see yourself in five years?
Albert: I don't know- maybe in jail or out on the streets. I don't know.
The Beat: You've told us in the past about many things that you are excited about doing in your future. What are some of those things?
Albert: Well, I do want to work in the construction business.
The Beat: How are you going to do that?
Albert: My uncle has a business and I can work for him as a mechanic at first. I need to finish highschool and maybe go the Cabrillo. Then I can go to a trade school and get my contractor's license.
The Beat: That's a great thing to work for! You have that all thought out. What will it take for you to put that into action and keep with it?
Albert: I want to do good for my uncle and for my new girlfriend.
The Beat: That's a good motivation. It's also a great feeling to accomplish things- to set a goal and feel pride all for yourself when your hard work pays off.
Albert: That would be cool.

-Albert

From The Beat: We know that you have solid plans, love for your family, and a desire to do great things in your life. Stay focused on these things. You have a very real and possible goal mapped out. Five years is not a long time. You can either be living your dream at the end of that time, or sitting back in here, or worse. It's your choice. We expect the best out of you.

I Can't Think

I can't think
looking at a toilet and a sink.
Five walls
and a room, hella small.
I am laying on a mattress
where I fell to the ground.
Now I am thinking -
they're not playing around.
I am locked up for the first time,
thinking about the days
when I was on the grind.
I finally got a girl that's mine.
I did a crime
so I got to do my time.
When I get out I am going to shine.
I am going to get my dough
and keep things on the low.

-A newbie

From The Beat: It sounds like your time in the hall has opened your eyes, kind of perhaps a good lesson for you, maybe? It's good to admit a mistake and take responsibility for it- and to have someone to come home to. Yes, you will shine and can avoid the same mistake.

On Staying In/Dropping out

I think that school is cool when you are having fun, and when you are making money. It's pretty cool, but it gets boring. When I get bored, that's when I leave school... that's when you get kicked out. Then you have to go to a new school - at home. When that happens, it is cool. That's all I have to say... and I miss all of the sexy girls.

-Damien

From The Beat: While making money and appreciating pretty girls are motivating you now, try to think about the bigger reason for school. The girls and the money are not in the hall! You have goals to have a business and enjoy a better lifestyle when you are older. An education will help you greatly towards this and will open many doors for you. Get real, get serious. This is your life and you're the only one who can make it better than it's most recently been.

SNAP

My heart's in my head.
Y'all hear what I said.
I put you to bed.
I know this kid named Zed,
Or maybe his name was Freud.
Y'all hear what I said?
It is a love poem
Or maybe no...
Is that guy Head or Zead or Jed,
Or was it Freud?
I look all over
Then I got pulled over.
I smoke a cigarette
Then the cops said
Don't jet.
That's it.
I have seen the set.

-Zach

From The Beat: A very clever guy you are. We're waiting for the day when you start putting that big brain into service. First, you must serve yourself. You've let yourself become a slave to a way of life that leads you here, to the hall. There have been moments when you've broken through, recognized what you need to do. We're hoping that awakening comes sooner than later. You are a talented fellow and you could be doing good things in the world. But that won't happen until you've learned how to do good things for yourself.

On Staying In Or Dropping out

Did I attend school daily? Yes, I showed up every day to school. I never cut. I always like to go to learn more so I can get my grades up.

Also, I like to go so I could learn more about Mastercam; it's related to Autocat- a graphic design computer program. It will get me a good job. I am interested to go to college to take that course so I can make good money. I think that I am going to graduate from high school.

-Fernando

From The Beat: That is a great plan! Our hats are off to you for finding such a valuable thing in your highschool. Keep with it and graduate so you can go forward with your plan. You seem very interested in learning computer graphics. That is a good and stable profession. Keep that goal close to you through this time and use it as motivation to keep on track. We expect you to do very well.

On What I left Behind And What I Want To Return To

I miss my job in the smog shop. I really liked it. It was fun and I worked with good people. We all used to go out to dinner. I made good money and could buy things that I wanted.

I also have good friends at home.

I miss my family. My mom and dad were pissed off and hurt when I got sent to the hall, but I talked to them and smoothed things over.

I'm just like my Dad. I don't think things through. He used to get into trouble but now he's over it and does well in life.

I have a 23 year old sister and a nephew named Jayden.

I'm glad that I only have to be in here for 2 weeks. I have to control my anger and not get into fist fights. My counselor and anger management classes teach me how to breath and walk away.

-Kevin

From the Beat- You are fortunate to have many good things going for you at home. Sounds like you have pride in your work and a deep love for your family. Remember those things when you become angry. You obviously have learned the skills to make better choices. Good for you! Remember those things so you can continue to prosper at home and enjoy your loved ones.

DETOXED

Vortexed
A text message laced with sex.
My life is like a mess and I can't find the rest.
Love is never seen and hope is not available until 2:15.
"They're not on both sides",
But what in the hell is that supposed to mean?
How is it that this life of mine becomes
What I wrote .....
What was earlier a metaphor for what we spoke.
Addition can disguise itself as a need,
Pocket lint post dust is still weed.
It's not "a shot" when it's scrap buds left over.
To a cop though it's whatever he can find
That can get you in trouble.
The trouble with sexiness is
It's nothing to believe in,
Too young and they yell like this pleasure is a sin,
Split second later and I don't even want this.
Stop when no,
Go slow when I don't know..
But you never, you never moved your hand,
Nothing's left to understand.

-Fidgett

From The Beat: Wow ,what inspired this effort. We suppose life experiences. What must change to keep you on the other side of the fence? What's the plan upon getting out?

Sittin'

I'm sittin' in Juvenile Hall
Starin' at the four white walls.
I hear my name called
And then I fall.
But I continue to ball
and I try to ask God why.
I kick it to the left
and I bought a bottle
from a kid named sly.
But Bezzy, that's why.
A real ninja never cries
and you never get
a real ninja to testify.

-Zach

From Beat- Your writings are clever, but do you think they really express your true feelings? You can use this time in the hall to work through some hard things- with the help of your counselors, and by writing about them. We've seen more genuine work from you. Keep that up. We know you have much to share.

T-M-R

At night I dream about her and
how beautiful she is.
Desire burns inside me
pounding on my heart like an iron fist.
No words can say how much
of a blessing she really is.
Her eyes as beautiful as a sunset
fill my heart and soul with bliss.
This is perfection at its best.
I dream about her in my arms
as our lips caress.
And I'll care for her
'til the day I lie to rest.

-J

From The Beat: Notwithstanding our general policy of encouraging you all to not use The Beat as a forum for personal love letters, we'll say, in this case, that you can write one love poem every one hundred years.

Leave Me Alone

Why are all of you bothering me?
Stop wasting my time.
It is dumb that I have to write.
I don't want to write.
Why can't I sit and watch TV?
Instead I have to write.
Why are all of these people bothering me?
This is stupid.
What I want them to do is leave me alone.
I want to be alone.

-Frustrated and Detained

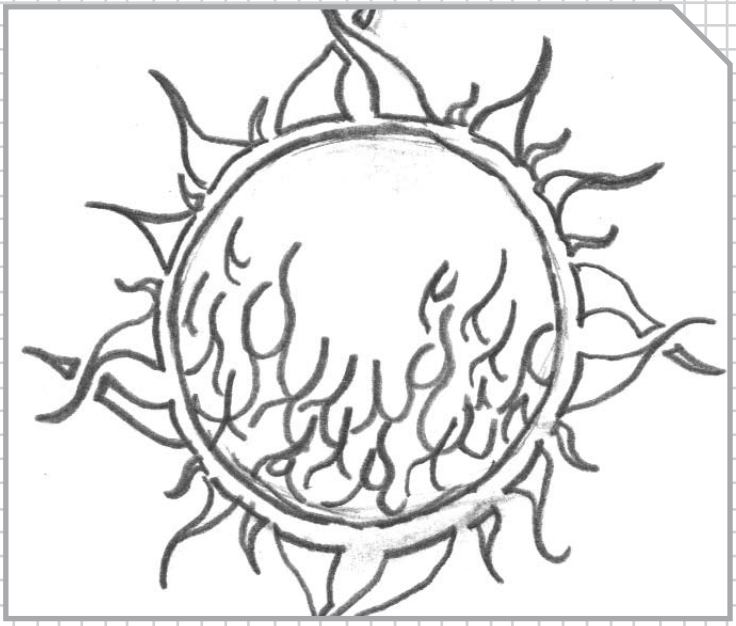
From The Beat: We understand - your feelings are a normal reaction to what you're going through. It's OK to be angry. Writing and talking about your feelings can really help to work through them. We each have own way of dealing with things. We, along with your counselors, are here for you, if you choose to accept what we have to offer.

Day Dreams

As I kick back and reminisce
I pass my thoughts to new hands.
Some say this journey has made me into a new man.
I say that what my eyes have seen
made me the creature I am.
Through quarrels, to wars, in the city I love,
to the lonely late nights in the room I now live,
with no one to hold, to touch, or to love,
my thoughts in the sunsets
and the clouds above.

-Kasper

From The Beat: We are the sum of what we've seen, and what we've experienced. And we're more than that. We are potential and promise, too. And we'd say that you have a lot of both. Keep writing.



On Staying in/Dropping out

If I dropped out I would miss being able to go to a normal school, do normal work and be with normal teachers. I would miss the classes that I have at my school.

-Anonymous

From the Beat: It is a good goal to stay in school and be in your familiar environment with the classes and teachers that you like. If you need to attend an alternative program to finish your education, that could be a good option too. There are great teachers who care about your best interest in many places. You're on the right track.

Ver A Mi Madre

Si alguién me regalara un pasaje, lo primero que le pidiera es que me llebe a ver a mi madre querida a quien amo tanto. Sólo le pido a Dios que me de la oportunidad de volver a verlo. También a mis hermanitos del alma. ¡Dios, permiteme volver a ver a mi madre!

From The Beat: Esperamos que algún día se cumpla tu sueño de ver a tu madre. La madre es lo más apreciado que alguién pueda tener, nunca lo olvides. ¡Cuidala!

To See My Mother

If I were given a ticket, I would go see my mother who I love so much. I ask God to grant me the opportunity to do so. I also want to see my liltle brothers. God, permit me see my mother!

-Ricardo, San Francisco

From The Beat: We hope you make this dream a reality. A mother is the most appreciable thing we can have. Take care of her!

Con La Ayuda De Dios

Sabes, yo llebo dos meses aqui y ya no aguanto, pero con la ayuda de mi Dios, la otra semana salgo. Yo confio en Dios y yo sé que él va a ayudar a salir de aqui. Si tú confías en él, muy pronto saldras de aqui.

Tú sabes que la jira en ese camino hacia acá es dura y hemos venido hasta aqui para encontrar una nueva vida. Por eso hay que aprovechar mientras estemos aqui y no hay que desaprovecharla las cosas que la vida nos da. En nuestros países, la vida es muy dura porque hay mucha probreza. Mientras uno está aqui, uno puede ayudar a tu familia.

Si tú quieres cambiar, lo puedes hacer si le pides a Dios.

También demos gracia a este programa porque gracias a este programa podemos desahogarnos. Cuidensen carnales.

From The Beat: ¿Si Dios te cede el privilegio de salir de aqui, que haras diferente con tu vida? Si, te dan otra oportunidad, no la vayas a desperdiciarla. Recuerda y manten siempre en mente lo duro que es la vida en tu pais. Hay mucha gente que dependen de ti y estando en este lugar estas dando muchas hacia atras en vez de continuar adelante.

With The Help Of God

You know what, I've been here two months and I can't handle it anymore. But, with the help of God, I'm going to get out next week. I have faith in God and I know he will help me get out of here. If you believe in him, you will get out soon.

You know the journey to come here us hard and we've gotten here for a better life.

That's why you have to take advantage of everything while we are here, and not waste the opportunities life give us. In our countries, life is very hard because there is so much poverty. While being here, you can help your family.

If you want to change, you can do it if you ask God for help.

We should also give our thanks to this program that give us the opportunity to relief our feelings. Thank you my brothers.

-Luis, San Francisco

From The Beat: If God grant you the privilege of getting out of here, what will you do different in your life? If you are given another chance, don't waste it. Remember and always keep in mind how hard it's life in your country. There are many who depend on you and by being in this place; you are backing yourself off instead of succeeding.

Cuando Estamos Lejos

Cuando estamos lejos de nuestros familiares, los extrañamos mucho por estar encerrado. Solo podemos sentir esto, aquellos quienes nos ha pasado esto saben lo que se siente estar encerrado.

Le pido a Dios que algún día me de la oportunidad de salir de aqui para poder ver a los míos de nuevo ya que los extraños mucho.

Es tan lindo la livertad, pero estar aqui me ha enseñado muchas cosa que no voy a olvidar. La verdad es que la cárcel es para los hombres. Afuera vives mucho major.

From The Beat: ¿Cuales són las cosas que este lugar te ha enseñado? La oportunidad de salir de aqui, estamos seguro que la tendras, pero que haras con esa oportunidad es la pregunta. ¿Qué haras?

When We Are Away

When we are away from our families, we miss them because we are locked up. The only people that would know this are those who are locked up.

I ask God to give me the opportunity to get out of here and be able to see my loved ones who I miss.

Freedom is beautiful, but being here has taught me a lot of things I will never forget. Jail is for men. Outside of here, you live better.

-Ricardo, San Francisco

From The Beat: What are the things this place has taught you? The chance to get out of here, you will get it for sure, but what are going to do with is the question. What will you do?

Freedom is beautiful, but being here has taught me a lot of things I will never forget.

Lo Que Deseo

Yo creo que él era un gran dibujador y pintaba unas obras de arte buenas. Si me regalaran un ticket iría a China. Me gustaría conocer ese pais porque dicen que China es un pais hermoso.

La experiencia que vivi se trata de cuando mi tío estaba preso, porque cometio un delito. Espero que a nadie de mi familia le pase esto que estoy viviendo. Tampoco me gustaría que a nadie de los que viven aqui volvieran. Sé que muchas veces, uno falla, pero primero Dios, todos vamos a salir de aqui. Que Dios nos bendiga!

From The Beat: No deseas que a nadie le pase lo que te está pasando, pero deberías de cuidarte para que no te vuelva a pasar a ti. Estas avertido de eso?

What I Wish

I think he was a great artist and he would do beautiful things. If I were given a ticket to China I would go. I would go there because people say it is a beautiful place.

The experience I lived is about when my uncle was in jail for a crime. I hope nobody from my family go through what I am going through. I also wouldn't want this to happen to any of us who are here. I know we make mistake, but hope God, we all are going to get out of here. God bless us!

-Juan San Francisco

From The Beat: You wish noone goes through things you are going, but you should be careful not to let this happen to you again. Are you aware of that?

PIECES • OF • THE • WEEK

No Chance Or Choice

They say you should not have sex 'til you are ready to have kids
But every year you have more teens than adults having sex
Every day you see more young girls having babies
It's like a baby taking care of a baby
Adults look forward to knowing who's gonna be the next President
While teenagers are waiting to see if abortion will get legalized through all the states
When you take the choice to have sex, you are saying that you are willing to take the chance to get pregnant
In other words, if you had the balls to have sex, you should have the same balls to take care of a baby
I know people who abort children without no feelings
They think it's normal, but it's not
They should get looked up for murder, because it's a life you are killing—a baby who has no clue what is happening
Those people will never know if you could be killing our next President
Or a person who can cure cancer, because you took its life without giving it a chance
You are not God to say who should live or not
Like I said before, like you had the guts to have sex, have the same ones to take care of it
"I'm not going to have a baby if it's gonna ruin my life," is what they say.
Don't be conceited and only think of yourself; you're gonna ruin theirs, too.
There are other options than abortion
There's adoptions for people who would love to have a baby, but can't
That's one of your choices.
And also, look for help, don't take the easy way out
I've seen lots of 13-18 year-old girls still going to school after having their baby
Trying to succeed for themselves and their babies
Not trying to be sexist, but more girls have more guts than men to go with the consequences of having sex
Guys either leave you or say it's not theirs, or tell you to abort it
There's ways to have sex without risking someone's life
For guys, condoms and getting caped
For girls. the shot, the patch and pills
So there's no excuses
Either give them a chance and choice, or don't take the risk of having a baby

-Smiley

From The Beat: We think the advice you give, both to boys and to girls, about bringing a new life into this world is absolutely right on the money. It hurts to see people who cannot yet take care of themselves making a baby that they also can't take care of, perpetuating a cycle that doesn't help them or their baby. We're not going to get into the abortion debate, except to point out that many people don't agree with your conclusion that abortion is the same as murder, or that a fetus is the same as a baby. Abortion is legal throughout the country, so nobody can get prosecuted at this time. But even for those who believe in abortion, there are alternatives, like the ones you suggest (adoption, for example). But the best course of action is to prevent pregnancies in the first place, and it's highly irresponsible of both boys and girls who don't take those precautions. Thank you for writing this and giving us your opinion on this important topic.

The Cell

The cell ain't nothin' nice. My best advice would be not to come but, you feel me, for someone on probation that is lightweight inevitable. Don't come in here thinking it's going to be easy, 'cause ninjas be going schiz in their rooms. Lockdown ain't nothin' easy, so be cool, but hold your own. Find something to do, like read or write, and your time will fly by. Don't get involved in this stupid-ass drama up in here. Just do your time, get out, and enjoy your freedom.

-J's

From The Beat: This is a Piece Of the Week because it gives such good advice to anyone who has the misfortune of getting locked up. We hope you are following your own advice, and that when you do get out to enjoy your freedom, you enjoy it in a way that lets you hold onto it.

I'm Eighteen Now

I'm eighteen now, still stuck in this place. It's been five and a half months now. A lot has changed. I grew out my hair. And the way I think has gone worse. I'm going insane, sitting in my cell. I stare at these white walls, wishing they would fall. I toss and turn on my bed, trying to find a way to go to sleep. I wake up in the middle of the night, sweating all over.

Finally turned eighteen. I didn't want to spend it like this. I wanted to kick it with the homies at the park and drink and smoke. But that's just a thought now. Maybe next year or the next, whenever they let me out. They said until I'm twenty-one, but by then I would have no home to go to. The days go by, day by day, like the numbers on a clock. I'm eighteen now, but this shhh never ends.

-Casper

From The Beat: We don't know what gifts allow you to express such simple thoughts in a way that brings tears to our eyes, that allow us to get inside you just a little and feel what you're feeling. Of course you want to be out with your friends, who wouldn't? We wish the system was less like a prison and more like a college where you could learn and interact with older and younger, males and females. But we are stuck with what we have, and time moves forward. You're wrong to think "this shhh never ends." It does. What do you do to pass the time in a way that will help you when the time for you to walk out comes? Are you reading? What kind of books do you like? Are you exercising (body and mind)? Are you talking to anyone about what's going on in your mind? These are all important things to do so that you can get through this dark period in your life, and so that you can look back on it from some brighter time in the future.

The Game Has Changed

How the world changed
Boy, it's gotten insane
Everybody wanna gangbang
Blue and red flames
Anything y'all claim fo' wannabe fame
The respect of the game changed
Fo' paper and anything else you own, homie'll bust yo' brain
The game has changed 'cause all the real and fake alike wanna carry a thang
These the ones who would really bust you like a video game
The game has changed 'cause folks don't play no type of jokes
Off coke or pills
A mug will get chu killed
The game has changed 'cause everybody gotta eat
Most feedin' the fam
This when the shhh really hit the fan
The game has changed for reasons most will never understand
But where I'm from shots are natural, like music from a band
I just wonder when this cycle gone end
Fo' all the homies gettin' caught up like a crazy whirlwind
Keep yo' heads up in this crazy world we in
The game has changed because everybody' mind frame
But it ain't too late, you could switch it up
Like a female with nice hips and a big butt, bra
Just trust fo' the fam I always love

-Twin

From The Beat: We also wonder when this cycle is going to end because an entire generation of young men is being wiped out by other young men. You may not be able to change the streets where "shots are natural," but at least you can make some changes in your own relationship to those streets. Like you say, it's not too late to switch it up.

PIECES • OF • THE • WEEK

What I Feel

Feel the weight on my shoulder, put yourself in my shoes
Before you pass judgment upon the choices I choose
I'm just a kid growing up and hand-protecting what I love
Because at anytime the walls can come tumbling down
And knock me off the top of the ladder back down to the ground
Now I'm back to point A with a strike against me
And society don't like me, though they might pretend to
It ain't right what we do
But, damn, it's reality
And I'm gonna do the best I can, and not become a casualty
Evil thoughts of mine give me the urge to break
'Til the point of going crazy
But I got to be strong, or I'll end up getting blasted
And laid in my casket
Cops locked up my homies
So tell me how the hell am I supposed to feel?
Mental anguish eats at my mind like a disease
I have visions about my enemies lined up on their knees
Hogged tied up and suffering every little thing that I've suffered through
Then pass your judgment upon the choices I choose

-Luis

From The Beat: We cannot pass judgment on your choices, Luis, except to say that they have not served you well. The consequences of those choices is what's led you here, and will lead you to much worse places if you continue to make them. The visions you have of hurting your enemies are, undoubtedly, the same visions your enemies have about hurting you. But at the heart of things, we all have our tears, our laughter, our desires, our dreams. And if you strip away what's on the outside, there's no way to tell the differences between who you are and who they are on the inside. You've been given some very difficult choices to make, and all we're saying is the ones you've made have put you in the box where nobody wants to live.

I'm Going Insane

I'm going insane, I'm going insane
Why? I don't know
Is it because of this place or the faces I see in the shadows
I'm going insane, I'm going insane
Why? I don't know
Is it the voices in my head or the spiders in my bed
I'm going insane, I'm going insane
Why? I don't know
Is it the pain I feel or the devil's call from hell?
I'm going insane, I'm going insane
Why? I don't know
Is it because I can't sleep or when I do it's the nightmares that I have
I'm going insane
Am I the only one, the only victim of this sickness
The only one that wishes the world to end

-Casper

From The Beat: We know you're not the only one who feels this way, Casper, but that is not much comfort. The "why" questions you pose in this powerful poem are all very important ones, and we bet there are others you haven't asked here. How can we find some help for you, someone who might be able to help you find the answers? Wishing the world to end is a heavy thought to have to carry around, but try to remember that what you're feeling today you may not be feeling tomorrow. Your life is much more than a snapshot of this moment, it is a moving picture.

Tear Drop

Dear Mama,
I love you for always being there for me
I'm sorry for messing up
I hope that you can forgive me
Mama, I'm sorry for all the tears you've shed
I know I'm driving you crazy
You always tell me I'm driving you dead
I hope you know I think about you all the time
This is the longest I've been away
I just want to let you know, Mom, that I'm doing okay
You're always on my side, no matter what I do
I want you to know how much I really love you
When I was hurt, I woke up and you were there
I saw tears in your eyes
Your hand fixing my hair
You told me, "It's okay, Mijo, I'm here"
I couldn't talk and could barely move
Then I started to tear…
Then I realized how much I love you
Always and forever
Happy Mother's Day
Love, your son

-8 Ball

From The Beat: Reading this wonderful Mother's Day tribute made us start to tear. We feel just how much your mom loves you — and how much she wants you to stop doing the things that put you in such danger and cause her such pain at the thought of losing you. These are beautiful words. Can you reinforce them by giving your mom what she wants most of all — you at home safe and out

The Battle Inside Me

I'm vile, I'm homicidal
The things I do almost make me suicidal
I come home after a night of being wild
But then, I shut myself in my room and read my Bible
I can't stop committin' sin after sin
But that don't mean I don't wanna be forgiven
I think Satan's winnin'
The battle inside me that him and God are fightin'
By this time I'll be surprised if God don't strike me down with lightnin'
At times I feel fine, like I can do no wrong
But at other times it's almost like I'm Satan's spawn
I ain't tryin' to sound crazy, I really ain't kiddin'
I don't know if I'ma end up doin' God or Satan's biddin'
I'm in a nightmare and asleep in a deep slumber
And by the time I wake up, I might be six feet under
But I ain't never gon' give up, 'cause I know I can be saved
I'ma fix this mess, even if I gotta dig outta my own grave

-Slim Shaney

From The Beat: This is a powerfully written, but very disturbing poem. The way we look at it, Satan is out on the streets that pull you in, while God is inside you and pulling you back. That means you have some real power in you that you might not even know you have. Here's the one thing we can say by way of advice: don't try to "fix this mess" by yourself. Each of us needs help throughout our lives. Nobody achieves things entirely alone, and sometimes we need more help than at other times. Look at the reasons you keeping "sinning" and seek the help you need to deal with those reasons — whether it be alcohol, drugs, or anything else. There are people who have been through what you're experiencing who want to help. If we can help you find that help, we will, but whether it's us or someone else, don't try to do it alone.

Wow, "Dawg"

I thought about all the things I want to be
An' I sat in the chair as the judge yelled at me
She said, "Out-of-state placement
Maybe then you'll learn…"
But that time came and went
I took my turn…
I been through this
Too many times
Smoked too much weed
And did too many lines
I wish that these people
Would leave me alone
All of this because I had a color on my phone
I'm back with the four walls
Who I can call my best friends
This shhh with me will never end
I was handlin' my stuff
I even got a job
An' the requirements didn't include
To steal and rob
I'ma handle my shhh
If I'm in the Bay or not
Pack for and relocate
To a new spot
I can't let this get me down
In that words of my Cantinflas
"You gotta keep you' head up
Even when the road gets hard
Never give up"
With that, I'm out
Got those words in my head
I love him
And I'll never forget what he said

-Guera

From The Beat: It sounds like you were on the way to a new way of living, and one that should give you a better future than your past. We're sorry you find yourself back in this place for what we think of as a minor violation, but don't fall down thinking that you can't get right back up. Don't let this be an excuse to tell yourself that "this shhh will never end" so that you can go back to doing what got you here to begin with. Just ride this one out, and heed Cantinflas' excellent advice.

Free World

My family at home, missin' me, man. They can't wait until I get home and get on that positive track. There is a lot that I got to do when I get out. I got five more weeks left, and I already been making my to-do list. First and foremost, I gotta get a j ob. Want a job that pays well so I could get my own place and everything. Change ain't a bad thing when you did wrong most of your life.

-Mookie

From The Beat: We love the idea of a "to-do list" Mookie, because that is another way of saying you are making real plans that you can follow. Of course, we hope that school is part of those plans, because it can help you get that well-paying job you want, and bring you the freedom and independence your family wants for you. Keep your eyes on the prize.

Army?

I'm thinking 'bout going to the Army. Go and get trained to kill, learn how to survive if you get lost, how to handle situations with a knife or gun, even your fists. Do some time and get trained, then go to war.

When I see soldiers on TV killing their enemies, it makes me want to be that soldier. I want to be the soldier with the gun. But the thing is, I don't want to do it for America. I hate America. I want to do it for me, not them. If I live and don't get killed, I'll help my family.

I'm getting tired sitting behind these cells and white walls. I know I'm going to end up doing life, but what if I go to the Army? Then I won't have that life in prison. I don' know, it's messing my brain up. I want to go, but, then, I don't. If I go, then I'll die. If I stay, then I'll die. What's the difference?

-Casper

From The Beat: There's one thing that makes you exactly the same as everyone else in the world: you will die. We will all die. That's guaranteed the minute we're born. You're right about that — whether you go into the Army or not, you will die. So, it's not death that we question, but life. It's how we live, how we get to that inevitable ending that is of concern to us and, we believe, of concern to you... To change the subject (slightly), we would love to read an essay by you about why you hate America. We can guess some of the reasons, but we don't want to guess. You are such a good writer, and you think so deeply about what you write, we would look forward to reading your critique. Think about it.

Same Ways

Pops was the same
Takin' over his game
Can't go back
Too late to react
Mind is gone
Lost my family's bond
Don't know what to do
Keep actin' like a fool
Strapped with the crime
Stuck here servin' my time
Same people comin' back
Gettin' money just sellin' crack
Dedicated to the street
5-0 blurp, I'm gone on feet

-Palou

From The Beat: A tight little poem, Palou, but is it a tight little life? Losing your family's bond is a heavy price to pay, and for what? (We took out the gun reference.)

Change

It's been two years since I been to this shack
But now I'm back trying to get back to that act
Day and night
Tryin' to see the light
Might not touch down
'Til I hit the ground
But I'm about to hit a rebound
Tryin' to puff
Before I get buff
Staff on my line
But I'm just tryin' to shine
System seem blind
I tried to change something and not hang
But all they hear is "bang bang"
Ain't shhh go'n change but my blang blang
Dad keeping strong
So I won't be alone
And so I won't be stressed and depressed
Trying to get some rest for the best
Time going by slow
I really wanna blow a fat O

-Wizz

From The Beat: Does this mean that you had two years of freedom before you blew it and ended up right back here? Why? The system may very well be blind, but how well do you see? When you look around you, what do you see? Are your eyes open?

My Life Is Harder Than My Parents'

I have definitely been through a lot more than both of my parents, making my life harder than theirs. Most of the situations that have made my life harder are because of decisions I have made that have put me in them. I have continuously made decisions over and over that have taken my life into a downward spiral. Neither one of my parents have ever had to deal with addiction to drugs the way I have, and that is a very difficult thing to deal with.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Yes, addictions of all kinds are difficult to deal with, but dealing with them is something you have to do, whether because you try to overcome them, or allow them to overcome you. There are many programs that can help, and no one can do it alone. Seek the help you need, and make your future better than your past.

Crazy Livin'

The way I live is crazy, now
I know why we say
"Mi vida loca" in my days....
As I think way back,
When I was free to walk the street
I always had to watch my back
Rivals live on the other side of the tracks
Walking with a bat down my pants
Looking for them
If you wear the wrong color
You get hit like thunder
It's pretty crazy
And it wouldn't amaze me
If you got shot
In your own parking lot
We say, "Can't stop, won't stop"
But, in other words,
"We ain't goin' to stop 'til the casket drops"
Murders and drive-bys, dead bodies and blood
This is what happens when you put on them gloves
Evil thoughts got me trippin' while I'm slippin'
In the darkness
There's no room for love because the weakness it brings
So all we have is respect towards others
We're not criminals, we're warriors of the streets
We fight for our cause
And our cause fights for us
But this is the life I choose it, ended me up behind these walls
The missions we go on to prove we're down
We might look like each other, and all you see is the different rag color
But there's a lot you don't understand
Why we hate each other
It's another world out there and in here
All it brings to our familia is a fallen son, father and a brother
Bodies and tears drop, revenge and fear come
Tattoos, Dickies, Cortezez and paños is a Cholo's style
Lowriders, clowns, oldies and Cholas is a Cholo's pleasure
This is the crazy life I choose to live, so I live it to the fullest

-Casper

From The Beat: Whether you choose this life or not, it's clear to us that it's not good for you in any way: your mind is hurting you, the system is hurting you, and you're hurting yourself (and the family that loves you). You're right, there is much we don't understand, but hate among people who appear to be brothers on the outside is as old as Cain and Abel in the Bible (Genesis). There is also much that you don't understand, though you are blessed (or cursed) with certain intellectual gifts suggesting that you will understand more as your experiences broaden, as you grow, and as you are exposed to a wider world than the one you grew up with. The question of choice — did you choose the gang life or did it choose you — is not so easy to answer. We can understand why it's important to believe you are the master of your own decisions, but none of us is completely free. All of us respond to the conditioning and lessons we learn from infancy. The hard part is to examine that conditioning as we mature, and decide whether to continue as we always have, or to make new and different choices. As you see where your choices have led, we hope you examine your life in a new light — that you are a unique and truly valuable individual, and that you are the cause you should be fighting for.

Free Write

When I wake up in the morning, I feel a sense of depression and that I just want to get out of here. As I take a bite into my breakfast, I feel I could be eatin' better food than this. It's just another day locked up like an animal. All I can do is suck it up and tell myself, "I'm getting out some day, and I ain't gonna be stuck in here forever."

I make this place my home if it's therapeutic, because in case I don't get out on my court date. People come and worry about their time. When that happens, I tell the dude to pray for a lucky sentence.

-Lil' Villain

From The Beat: Praying for a lucky sentence might deal with the situation at hand, but what about the next situation? In what way is this place therapeutic. And, in what way can that "therapy" help to keep you out of here in the future?

HECTOR "TOTO" ALVAREZ

Future Or Past

We took the next step and called it love
You stole my heart that's been broken once
I hated that word for many years
Gave you my love and that's my most fear
Could you handle a broken heart?
Would you fill it with love or tear it apart
I'm tired of calling a girl my ex
And filling my heart with emotional stress
There's one question I got to ask
Are you my future or the past?

Locked Up

Seventh time in juvenile hall
In a room without door knobs
Inside a cell regretting what I did
Hopefully they forgive me I'm just a kid
Marks on my wrist from the cuffs to tight
Court the next day so I prayed all night
Labeled a criminal for stealing a car
Judged by the cover so stuck behind bars
Expecting the worst and hope for the best
I ran too many times so no chances are left
Back in a cell surrounded by bricks
Depending on mail and my visits
But no one comes and no one writes
My love is tough who's by my side?
Who is to blame my dad or mom?
Someone should have showed me right from wrong
My teenage life has been really tough
The reason why is cause I'm still locked up.

You're Mine

You're my girl who I do Love
I turn my back and I could trust
You're my heart that I do need
With out your love I cannot breathe
You're my glue we'll always stick
Our future's money, Marriage, kids
You're my sun that makes my day,
Can't see you from close but picture your face,
It's time to go but love can't end,
'Till paper pencil meet again.

We welcome Hector "ToTo" Alvarez to the pages of The Beat Within. Toto wrote these pieces when he was detained in Indio Juvenile Hall, in Riverside County, CA. Thanks to our new friend, Mr. Bryan Stephens who worked at Indio Juvenile Hall, he reached out to us and sent us the following five poems. We definitely appreciate hearing from Toto, and we look forward to working with Toto as well as Bryan in the near future. By the way, Toto, is now home and off probation. We wish him the best!

I'll Be Yours

I'll be your shadow in the day
Right by your side I'll always stay
I'll be your sweater in the cold
Compress our bodies my hands you hold
I'll be your clown to make you laugh
To cheer you up when times are bad
I'll be your diary tell me your secrets
In my heart I'll always keep it
I'll be your key to open your heart
To fill it with love not tare apart
I'll be your addiction that runs through your veins
Love is a drug I feel the daze
I'll be your man just open the doors
Only if you let me I'll be yours.

Easy To Die And Hard To Live

It's easy to die and hard to live
I fell to the floor as bullets hit
One to my leg and one to my rib
Another to my thumb and one to my wrist
Bullets burn just like the sun
Went in and out my wounds went numb
Four bullet holes with constant bleeding
It knocked me out woke up screaming
People were running and jumping fences
Tried to get air but I was breathless
Who shot me I thought in a hurry
But couldn't see no one my vision was blurry
On one leg I hopped out the party
Fell a few times still drunk from Bacardi
All I wanted to do was to sleep
Wake up at home and say it was a dream
But I expected this I wasn't even shocked
I knew one day I was going to get shot
Well this is the story to let everyone know
I lived like a soldier and didn't let go.

LA HAITIAN AUSTIN

How Could I Explain This?

How could I explain this?
It hurt when like don't seem to go right
And you did so much dirt you feel filthy
Wishing to overcome poverty and own some property
It's a possibility if I apply myself?
You go through like by yourself
With little or no assistance
It's vicious, how we overlook a vision
And make bad decisions
A black man lost, is so hard to bring back
If you can't sing, rap, play basketball, or get
Your resort to selling crack
Then one day you wake up and see all trapped
How could I explain this?
I'm so deeply in love with a woman who pays me no mind
Got me thinking she blind
Or just overlooking the signs
I want to make her mine

Our next writer is writing to us from San Quentin State Prison, in San Quentin Ca. Austin is a writer that brings something new to the pages of the Beat Within. Austin is asking how can he explain himself. How can he explain all the bad decisions, well he's gonna try. So listen up to Austin's poem and explanation.

I even wine and dine
I probably would quit this life of crime
If she just gave me some of her time!
How can I explain this?
Is it common to die?
So is it so complicated to survive?
To escape like we get high!
Willing to pay a tall guy to rise
Quit why can
Before it's too late and you don't have a chance
And it don't make you less of a man
If you here to ask questions to fully understand
It's hard to explain.

•CLAYTON GENE MCCORMACK•

The sounds so serene,
each cell in my being
Feels the fountain cascading life's call.

We welcome Clayton Gene McCormack to our pages, given he steps up to share these poems and his writing on the themes for this current issue. He's a wonderfully prolific writer from the CA Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA and we are honored to have his contributions! Give him a moment of your time and read a few pieces from our man Clayton!

Art That Blows Your Mind

Nature's art is what blows my mind
And the universe swirling with stars
Billions of stars the Milky Way finds
Billions of galaxies spread past the far

Or how about a hill full of flowers
Magically kissing your eyes?
Blessed are the days one can sit there for hours
And know every answer to the whys

Certainly human beings can create
Wonders that boggle the mind
But nature's the artist whose elements wait
To be relished, they, the dancers of time

One Way Ticket To...
I think I'd get down on my knees
And thank my patron with such ease
That blessed me with the golden key
To one-way, nonstop to Belize

It's not too far, I'd get there fast
Their "Life is Simple" die is cast
I'd see the future Mayan past
Where seeds of truth will always last

I dream of going now and then
The jungle blossoms with new friends
Those times I awake with grins
And wish a fast return again.

When You're Away
When you're away...
You fade from folks' thoughts.
If long enough, some may wonder
If it's the farm you bought

Once released, they'll...
"We thought you were dead!"
Shows they cared...
Of other things instead

And the kids...
All they know is you're gone
Screw the reason...
Alls they know is it was wrong

Left them there...
Abandoned and alone
Broken hearts...
Never mended now they've grown

And their tenders...
Prefer you not around
To upset things...
That were finally settled down

But they say...
Hope springs eternally
One can wish for...
A happy destiny...
A forever "I am free!"

The Spot
There's a spot I go to everyday,
Sometimes it's just in my mind.
A spot to relax and take a deep breath
And undo life's kinks--to unwind.

The gentlest breeze teases the leaves
Of willows so stately and tall.
The sounds so serene, each cell in my being
Feels the fountain cascading life's call.

"I'm alive! I'm alive!" A bullfrog hop-dives
And ripples the tranquil expanse.
Lily pads wave, then wanes what they gave
Relax, ease back, find your trance.

The Road

I can't afford any college credits
I've no funds to foot that bill.
Seems I'll have to keep on learning
And satisfy my own damn will.

Knowledge is the road to wisdom
And everyday I'll try to gain
A little bit of forward progress
'Til I reach that lofty plain.

I have glimpsed the good in knowing
Down life's road contentment lies.
Happiness is the way to travel,
Dappled love and drawn-out days,
Lovely sun-drenched drawn-out days.

MIKHAIL MARKHASEV

THE TRUTH ABOUT FRAGMENTITIS

Our next writer, the amazing and moving Mikhail Markhasev is delivering his column to us from a California correctional facility in Corcoran, CA. Mikhail never fails to come through with deep pieces reflecting a lot about life, his life. That's why he's in The Beat damn near every week. His words weigh a ton, and also by writing, it gets a ton of weight off his chest too. So sit down, make yourself comfortable and find some comfort in Mikhail's words.

For years I've suffered from fragmentitis, the origins of which I'll reveal a bit later. And although I'm now recovering, I still struggle with the frequent bouts and symptoms of this infection. Ever since I can remember, my inner and outer worlds have been fragmented, and shattered, and divided into "us" and "them". First, the divisions were political.

Then, after coming to America, I got trapped in the cage of racial divisions – contradictory and hypocritical as they were – fanned and spurred by some of my older friends who have been to CYA and prison. An interesting factoid in all of this was my coming to prison and meeting men of various races who were better men than I'll ever be. Ultimately, my racist prejudices were cured by my acceptance of the Christian faith, but I'm still wrestling with my own bigotry, religious elitism, and other stupidity, which oozes out in a variety of ways.

The world is sick with fragmentitis along every line imaginable. The various castes and segregations on the inside (in juvies, prisons, institutions) are merely a bleak reflection of "diversity gone bad" on the outside, everywhere, and in every heart.

But I'd like to get back evils in my own heart, the weeds I still need to eradicate. Human nature is one. There is no way getting around it. The world may be divided along political, national, racial, socio-economic lines (some divisions are natural, yet end up as sources of division), but people are still people, and have to be treated as people – not as a sub-group, as aliens, or as animals.

Darwinism and the "theory of evolution" teach that human beings are merely "smart animals" who have climbed to the highest rung of the DNA ladder, but otherwise in no way distinct from the rest of the creature world. The principle of "the survival of the fittest" is the justification, which allowed the scientific community both in Fascists and Communist states to sanction a systematic destruction of entire races or classes of people who were seen as 'inferior' to the ruling class.

To quote from the warped motto of "The Animal Farm", "All animals are equal but some are more equal than others." I was taught Social Darwinism in the Soviet Union, and then its' softer version in the USA. Because I never truly understood THE ORIGIN OF MAN, and never bothered to look beneath the evolution theory, it was almost natural for me to form the thought: we are better than them; we are right, while they are trash, and our experience justifies it.

I know that the current gang culture is more complex than this; I'm only relating the ABC's of my experience. If man is simply an animal (no matter how smart or exquisite), there's nothing "beneath his dignity", since animals do only what's natural. Following their instincts. If, however, I accept the Orthodox Church's teaching that every human being is made in the image of God, and that God became Man in order to redeem that image, to make every man in God's likeness, then the implications are tremendous!

When I despise, belittle, hurt, neglect, or murder a human being, I'm doing the same to the One in Who's image he is made, and I'm guilty of doing it to someone for whom Christ was crucified. Indeed, I'm despising Christ Himself, since He took upon himself our nature, every human being, and identified Himself with "the least of these".

So, where does fragmentitis come from, and what is the source? In Genesis (which is the first book in the Christian Bible), we read of Creation of Man, "So God created human kind in his image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created" (1:27). Soon after, in the 3rd chapter, we read of Man's Fall. This is a popular story: the Serpent seduces Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, Eve gives it to Adam, her husband, and they both hid in the bushes.

When called by God to answer for their actions, something strange happens: instead of bucking up and accepting responsibility, Adam blames his wife "whom God gave him" (implicating the Lord in the process); Eve points the finger at the Serpent, and passes the buck to a creature. What happened here? Fragmentitis.

The separation of man from God resulted in a fragmentation between Adam and Eve, with a further division between man and creation. It's all there, the beginning of the divisions, which continue to this day. We're fragmented spiritually, fragmented mutually, fragmented inwardly.

Some insist that Jesus Christ was white. Others say He was Black. On my ancient Icons He is pictured as a brown 1st Century Jew. In any case, He was first and foremost HUMAN, and gave Himself for all people, of all colors, from every nation, of all cultures. He didn't demand a bloody sacrifice of a human heart on His altar, but became a Sacrifice for those who sacrificed him.

It is Christ's Divinity that saves us, but it is His Humanity, which dismantles all White Supremacy, Black Power, and Brown Pride, forcing us to see all people in every strata as worth living for, and dying for. And it is because he suffered for a pathetic man like me, and loves the unlovable me, that inspires me to follow in his steps.

He was first and foremost HUMAN, and gave Himself for all people, of all colors, from every nation, of all cultures.

Real Life

Reality hides in eternity
Not about rebellion or conformity,
Not emptiness or having your fill
Eternity is a heart that's still
Some things don't matter
An extra worry is an extra fetter
What sparkles is full of duplicity
True life is found in simplicity.

THE TRUTH?

Everyone expects truth
Or so they say.
"Tell it like it is,
Give it to me anyway."
Truth hits in the guts
Before the healing it cuts
Squeezing out tears
Exposing dreaded fears
Putting on the spot
Every sinister plot
Whether we like it or not
Though we prefer to hide
Enmantled in darkness abide
Haunted by our naked shame
And looking for someone to blame.

MIKHAIL MARKHASEV

MAMA SAID THERE WILL BE DAYS LIKE THIS...

Initially, my intents was to pen another lofty and high-powered piece about this and that, but life is more than high-minded articles and spills...

Writing poems is dreaming,
Except when one awakes
Then reality strikes
And the universe quakes...
Then the soul is screaming
And true poetry streaming.

For the past year and a half I've had the distinguishing honor of being on our unit's MAC. This is the "Men's Advisory Council", which comprises an inmate committee (of every race) to represent the unit's issues before the Administration. Democracy in action! Sort of... Anyway. I'm the "OTHER" brother, the secretary, that is.

Honestly, I didn't volunteer for the job; someone just JFK'd me into the spot, "Ask not what your prison can do for you, but what can you do for the prison". And so, after spending almost all of my twenties in the SHU, where I had to swallow whatever the Administration dealt me, I'm now catapulted into a setting where I'm "of the people, by the people, and for the people". Sort of... Anyway...

It's easier for me to 'go with the flow' than to 'fight for mine'. The less things I stick my nose into, the easier for me to focus on where my nose needs to be. There are real issues worth fighting for, but this secretary stuff isn't my cup of tea, so to speak. I think of it as "collective complaining", sweating minute nonsense, matters about which I could care less, frankly-speaking. But, equally frankly-speaking, that's why God gave me this sorry job: so that I may step outside of my sorry self, and do a little serving to those around me.

Most of the working people in the real world wake up to go to work in places where it's difficult to work, sometimes around unpleasant people and unreasonable people. Reality is what it is, and if you don't work, well... that's why it's easier to come to prison, to have your rent paid by the state, to be clothed, fed and sheltered by Uncle Sam (or, uncle Arnold, if you will), and not worry about where your next meal is coming from, or how in the world rent is going to be paid at the end of the month, when you've spent the money to feed the kids, and buy medication for your elderly mother.

Prison is easy – that's why the majority of first-termers return for seconds and thirds. I often grumble beneath my breath, when I have to type up some stupid memo about our property, or yard program, or snivel to the captain about us "getting shorted" on something.

I'll say to myself, "what in the world am I doing? Am I bored, or what? I have plenty of things to do, so why am I making a case for thigns about which I don't care?" But the Lord reminds me in his own particular way that life is about caring for others, being a servant to others, and doing what needs to get done, whether I "feel" like it or not. The Lord takes care of me out of his great love, not because he is obligated or because I'm "special".

Fact is, my grumbling is a form of ungratefulness. And so he gives me the opportunity to do the same. What may be unimportant to me is important to others. And as one ancient Rabbi said, "Whenever a man is needed, endeavor to be that man." My murmuring an dinner gripping are nothing more than manifesting of my own selfishness, an inability to overcome myself and "wash the feet of others" in the same way that Christ washed the feet of the disciples on the night he was betrayed. He even washed the feet of Judas, his betrayer, and I'm unable to be faithful in the little that I'm given.

In doing what I don't care for, I'm learning to be patient and dependable, two qualities which I didn't have before. It's also a taste of life, where the important thing isn't doing what you like, but doing everything well, and with grace, May God help me, and keep me from my Folly!

In doing what I don't care for, I'm learning to be patient and dependable, two qualities which I didn't have before.

MARK KELLEY

Our next writer is writing to us from a correctional facility in Selma, Alabama. Mark Kelley is a new writer and was introduced to The Beat Within by Curtis Cook Jr.. Here's a few poems from Mark that he would like to share with us. Keep them coming Mark!

On The Brink

When will it end, this pain?
Impossibly perplexed by my deeds
Focused and clear opaqueness
What could possibly fix my mind frame?
"Don't try to fight it, this is how you think!"
A billion of neurons firing at once
My synapse explode causing an influx
Shaking hands, sweaty palms, I'm on the brink...

Estranged

Constantly estranged from life
Kicking rocks as I walk
Speaking to strangers, apathetic talk
Living in the past full f strife
Reeling inside my lies
I chip away and try to flee
To unshackle constraints, to be free!
I'm on a mission, no planks in my eyes.

He Comes

Affirmation now, no drama
Blasting trumpets create a mob
"Behold the Lord!", I begin to sob
Ascension imminently will end the trauma

Soul Guard

My soul is but a solarium
From which he pours solace
His suffering sufficient
No need for requiem
Forgiveness, his virtue
My transgressions; lawless
I bow down penitently and rue.

SHAWN MONTGOMERY

Our next writer is writing to us from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. Shawn is not new to The Beat Within. Shawn writes us regularly and always has some great input and positive writing. This week he really reaches out to the young ladies out there with pieces like "A Gift to my Young Queens and Sisters," and also pieces on parenting. Shawn is a terrific writer but not only that, a terrific person with some advice for all the youngsters out there trying to get their shhh straight.

I Have a Problem...

"FATHER, I HAVE A PROBLEM. It's weighing heavy on me. It's all I can think about night and day. Before I bring it to you in prayer, I suppose I should pray for those who are less fortunate than me - those in this world who have hardly enough food for this day, and for those who don't have a roof over their heads at night. I also pray for families who have lost loved ones in sudden death, for parents whose children have leukemia, for many people who are dying of brain tumors, for the hundreds of thousands who are laid waste with other terrible cancers, for people whose bodies have been suddenly shattered in car wrecks, for those lying in the hospitals with agonizing burns over their bodies, whose faces have been burned beyond recognition.

I pray for people with emphysema, whose eyes fill with terror as they struggle for every breath merely to live, for those who are tormented beyond words by irrational fears, for the elderly who are wracked with the pains of aging, whose only "escape" is death. I pray for people who are watching their loved ones fade before their eyes through the grief of Alzheimer's disease, for the many thousands who are suffering the agony of AIDS, for those who are in such despair that they are contemplating suicide, for people who are tormented by the demons of alcoholism and drug addiction.

I pray for children who have been abandoned by their parents, for those who are sexually abused, for wives held in quiet despair, beaten and abused by cruel drunken husbands, for people whose minds have been destroyed by mental disorders for those who have lost everything in floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. I pray for the blind who never see the faces of the ones they love or the beauty of a sunrise, for those whose bodies are deformed by painful arthritis, for the many whose lives will be taken from them today by murderers, for those wasting away on their deathbeds in hospitals.

"Most of all, I cry out for the millions who don't know the forgiveness that is in Jesus Christ, for those who in a moment of time will be swept into hell by the cold hand of death, and find their utter horror the unspeakable vengeance of eternal fire. They will be eternally damned to everlasting punishment. O God, I pray for them. "Strange. I can't seem to remember what my problem was. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Has Parenting Become A Forgotten Art?

If you think raising children is supposed to be easy, you need to talk to your grandmother. She will be more than happy to straighten you out.

Parenting is not supposed to be easy. It's full of headaches, worry, anxiety, depression, stress, anger, disappointment, and discipline. Sprinkled in there are sporadic bouts of joy.

If you didn't know this before you decided to have children, I wonder what kind of child you were growing up? Just think back. Remember how you drove your parents crazy? Remember how you taxed their last nerve, and how they had to restrain themselves from killing you?

Remember when you'd go out and do something stupid, knowing all along you'd get the whipping of your life when you got home? During that era, children and young adults always greeted older adults with "yes man," or "yes sir." Today, all we get is head nod, or a "what's up pops."Parenting has become something many of today's parents don't want to be bothered with. They're too busy still trying to have fun and grow up themselves. Some parents have even regressed and try to dress like their sons and daughters.

If you think parenting is supposed to be easy, you're dreaming. Just take a look at the behavior of some children these days, and you'll see something has gone terribly wrong. Can this problem be fixed? I believe it can. But, it's going to take great sacrifice by young parents. It means they will have to totally commit themselves to raising their children, disciplining them, and not being afraid of them. Parents must stop seeing their children as sources of income, and selfishness cannot exist within a family unit.

I know much of this will fall on deaf ears, but I hope that some parents who say they love their children will prove it by giving them a chance to be successful and make something positive out of their lives. The only way they will get that chance is if you provide it for them, or at least create an atmosphere where they can be safe, happy, and understand what it takes to get somewhere in life.

Nurture

Dedicated to Psych. Spec- Mrs. Mithiell, Ms. Oalkes, Ms. D and Nurse Edwards.

I give to the world in both subtle and awesome ways. Divine love inspires us as we nurture, devoting ourselves to a balancing art of time, energy, attention, and caring. As role models in relationships, we give to our dear ones with love and appreciation. Whether in a work setting or in our nurturers often serve as leaders, perhaps from behind the scenes, supporting their surroundings and improving their communities.

They multi-task through each day, giving in subtle and awesome ways. Good returns to nurturers increased many times over what they so generously gave. "She considers a field and buys it, with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard...She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

Proverbs 31:16,26

Choose Your Man Wisely

Love is wonderful, but it can make you oh so foolish. Know beforehand who you are sleeping with. Yes, he is good-looking, but what's going on in his handsome head? You have ambitions. Does he? You want to make a difference in the world. Does he? If he's a player now, he will be a player then.

Contrary to what many women think, you cannot change a man. However, you can take an imperfect man and help him to grow into the man of your dreams. Don't expect your man to be your father or like your father. But a man with your dad's best qualities (good provider, great parent, loving spouse, good role model) is a keeper.

Travel, Explore, Experiment

Don't be afraid to try the new and different (as long as it is healthy and wholesome. Find a passion, a hobby that relieves stress. Take guitar lessons. Try leading, painting, or cooking, (yes, you!) challenge your intellect. Enjoy life.

Find and Nourish Your Spiritual Center.

Whether you go to church or not, know that there is a higher being. Live right. Treat others, as you want to be treated. Learn the power of prayer. So much to say, so little space. Tell your parents (and other loved ones) how much you love and appreciate them. It's a gift that will keep giving.

Never Let a Man Hit You....

Or control you and make you lose sight of who you are and what your dreams are. Get away. Get out. Get help. He has issues, if you stay with him, you will have even more issues.

Be Your Own Woman

Yes, you are daddy's girl and mama's pain in the side, but you must take responsibility for your actions and your life. You claim to be grown, so act that way. Make your own decisions; set your own goals. Don't be overly influenced by peers or men.

A Talk With Glenda

Though my path is often weary
And a toilsome road I plod
All my burdens seem much lighter
When I've had a talk with Glenda

I can cast on her my sorrow
I can take her my fear
I can tell her every-heartache
I can feel her love near

And not only do I love her
Greater wonder is that she loves me
And our love shall have no ending
Now or through eternity

Oh, why do people doubt us
When our love is true
When we promised to go with each other
All this earthy journey through

I could not go on without her
She is all my hope and stay
And beneath her might love
Peace all ends along the way

If your life's a field of stubble
And your days just seem to plod
I can tell you what your trouble
Friend, you need to talk with a virtuous woman too
Proverbs 31.10-31

I Promise Myself

I promise myself to live by the authority of my own soul today and to practice being my own best friend and motivator. I promise to speak to myself kindly and to give myself the attention and nourishment I need. I promise to remember that others opinions, judgments and deed can't diminish me. I promise not to hide out or play it safe, but to bring my open heart and mastermind to each moment with confidence. I promise to believe in myself and in the genius of my soul mate Glenda.

I promise myself to live this day with joy and enthusiasm, to allow only love and light to flow through me no matter who or what life sends my way. Everywhere I look I will see beauty and through me no matter who or what life sends my way. Everywhere I look I will see beauty and possibility, and I let my light shine in service to my people, giving joyfully from a full cup.

I promise myself to remember that every circumstance is a pathway to God that every crisis is temporary and last not a moment longer than it takes for me to surrender it to God and ask for a divine solution. I promise myself to remember that every circumstance is a pathway to God, that every crisis is temporary and lasts not a moment longer than it takes for me to surrender it to God and ask for a divine solution.

I promise myself to remain faithfully aware that God is always here, with and within me. That no matter what the question, God is the answer. No matter what the need, God is the fulfillment. I promise myself to remember.

Don't Be Stupid

Use common sense. Don't tell your business. Be discreet. Know when to shut up and walk away. Know when to leave. (Get the picture?)

Don't Wrap Your happiness Around a Man....

Create or find your own fulfillment. Don't wait for Mr. Right and let him catch you on the go. And don't think you are less of a woman because you aren't dating anyone right now.

A Gift To My Young Queens And Sisters

For quite a while I've wanted to write a letter to the Black woman, my daughters, my nieces, my little sisters. Time has passed, new ones have burst upon the world; others have matured into independent young women. Yet, the need is still here-to give and to receive.

I'm proud of each of you-from my precocious, dramatic kindergarten and honor-student homecoming queen, to the brilliant medical student, the savvy ad executive, the successful entrepreneur and business woman, and the forward thinking attorney. I love your spirit. There is just something about the Black woman. You are strong (at least on the surface) and you often speak your minds before you know exactly what you want to say.

You're no saint, and you certainly don't know everything. But you have seen and heard and read and lived and experienced a lot. You know the joy of love and happiness as well as the pangs of disappointment and heartbreak.

I offer you my gift of experience and insight to you my queens and to all my young sisters trying to find their way in this unpredictable world.

Recession Pt. 2

"What recession?" I sell dope! The recession isn't affecting me that only goes for you working class people."

It seems as if the government isn't the only one taking advantage of the weakening economy. Albert Rodriquez, a 35 year old Hispanic American claims: "There's no such things as government financial green (Jobs) when you're banging red (Norte) or blue (Sureño) and even if you're black a gang conviction perceives you enemy number 1. I have no choice but to sell dope. I have kids whose moths need to be fed. They don't know what a recession is. What I suppose to do tell them the soldiers over there in Iraq are eating their breakfast?"

I walk in world among stories of pain the most evident beign the ones pretending to smile. Drugs are overly abused in an attempt to hide frowns. The new millennium is the age of Crystal Meth like the 80's era belonged to crack.

Hendrix Wilson a 24 year old African American looked at me and smiled when he told me: "Meth is my world! Everybody I know use meth or selling it." When asked: "Why meth? What effects does it have on you?" I was told: "Out here in this drug industry it's too much money to be wasting time sleep. Meth is an upper, sometimes it keeps me awake 3-4 days. I guess I'll get my rest when I die!"

In the mist of a receding economy desperation is being enticed with the tools of financial promises. Conjayla Thomas, a 32 year old Caucasian woman and a single parent of one, will be the first to admit the challenging of mother hood in a time of a receding economy. The innocence in her smile soften my frown when she told me, Eric, I have a 12 year old son whose father is a dead beat. It's just he and I. I find myself from week to week at the pawn shop selling jewelry that were given to me as gifts just so me and my son can eat.

I'm unemployed Eric! What am I going to do?"

Our next writer is coming straight out of San Francisco, Ca. E-Money is not new to The Beat. E-Money has been around since The Beat first started. And for those of you that don't know him E-Money has spent a while behind bars, and is fresh out trying to stay out and educate all the youngsters out there. E-money has experienced everything first hand, from juvenile hall, to Prison and now he's trying to survive out in the real world while the economy is in a recession. His writing is coming straight out of our office here at The Beat.

Every month thousands of jobs are being lost as if money grows on trees. Homes are being turned in due to foreclosure and the use of transportation is on the rise. Gas prices are at an all time high and local shops are going out of business every day. These days all Americans can do is pray. For I see a revolution in progress.

"It seems we are losing our homes and paying for Iraqi comfort zones," 48 year old Eddie Walker doesn't bite his tongue when it comes to politics and what he calls his depression." I'm an African American male other known as 'black' victimized by poverty with no address to call my own. Being homeless, living in the streets and laying on this hard concrete it's hard to get a full night sleep. I walk around tired all day.

Shelters are full and the majority of the time I prefer to sleep on the streets because people steal from you in shelters. I want a job but there's no shower to wash my body; I don't have clean clothes to wear. In addition, what kind of real job am I going to get with all these people being laid off due to the recession? I'll have a better chance winning the lottery."

Everywhere I go, everywhere I look I see expressions of pain. We are like gold fish fighting to catch our breath in a world where our resources are running dry. America used to be called the promise land but now we live in fear of a nightmare and shattered dreams. It all started with Genesis, now we are in our last days of revelations. What are we going to do!

Wholeness

People need to know who they are. They also need to be reminded who they are, frequently, by those who know them, and really loved them. It does not help people to speak honestly if they live in a world where that is punished.

People grow in their faith through relationships, wounded people heal in relationships, and unbelievers come to the Lord through the relationships. Growth, repair, maturity, and faith for all intimately tied to relationships. People do need people to achieve wholeness in a fractured world.

Healing Family Hurts

We need not be trapped by patterns of our parents, nor are we to be guilt trips if we have not raised our children perfectly. We carry not just past memories but the pain or love associated with those memories. But fortunately our past is always present, not only to us but also to Jesus.

We can get entrapped from the negative effects of past hurts and turn those hurts into gifts for loving by bringing Jesus love into a hurtful memories. When we invite Jesus into a hurtful memory, we are not asking him to erase or help us forget the past. Rather we are asking Jesus to "heal our memories".

CONTRITE

Our next writer is writing to us from a correctional facility in San Bernardino, Ca. Contrite is not a new writer as he's been blessing the pages of the Beat for a while now. He wants to share with everyone a few inspirational pieces so you can get inspired! Listen up folks!

Authority

I have the ability to overcome all past and future aspects; through God. I have the power to get unstuck, to avoid suffering because of unresolved conflicts dead to the flesh, alive in The Holy Spirit (Jesus), to supply, to meet, to receive, and to grow in him. Its power wrapped in love, exercised authority in humility. Maturity, peace, forgiveness, confidence, release from worry, fear, and guilt.

Heart, Soul, And Mind

Heart, soul, and mind work together in talking about our hearts, we need to be careful to note that the heart is not the emotions. Living from our heart is not simply doing what our feelings tell us. That would be folly.

Living from our heart means that there is an inner directive that, if governed by the spirit of God, keeps us on a path that is spiritually attuned to who we are and how God is leading. When our hearts are focused on God, we see who we are and what we are to be doing.

Being Forty-Three

Our next writer is writing to us from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. Jimmy pretty much breaks it down for everybody how his life goes. He's 43 years old so he's seen a lot and done a lot. For all you youngsters out there that think you're never gone make it to that age think again. Where do you wanna go and what you wannabe. Do you wannabe in the Pen? Or do you want to be a free man. Peep out Jimmy's piece and the way he lives. Go ahead and tell them Jimmy!

It's not easy being forty-three.

The way I was living my life as a youngsta growing up at home in Sunnyvale, CA., my step-mom used to say "Jimmy you won't live to be 30 if you keep goin' the way you're goin". I kept goin' the way I was goin' and lived through terrible things. Now that I look back on my life my step mother was right, I could have been dead so many times from messing with someone's ole' lady, all the K-J I use to smoke back in the days in San Jose, running around in the streets getting in fights, getting jumped and thinking it was cool. I was living life in the fast, fast lane not even my new born son Michael was enough to slow me down, or my second son Andrew slowed me down. I was always burning my ol' lady, my boys' mother, with other dudes' ol' ladies if they were locked up.

I even started several relationships with girls I said I loved, even though I knew I already had a family. I didn't care who I hurt or even ever gave it any thought I might hurt someone with what I was doing. I was living life too fast. I wanted to see the world. I wanted everything!

That was back in the day 1983, '84 when King and Story was live! King and Story was the cruising place back in them days and it was always packed on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights with low riders, Regals, and mini trucks. I used to dress in Ben Davis pants cutoff at the knees, Nike tennis shoes, and a tank top or no shirt at all and I always had my flag on me. I use to think I was the shiznit walking into 7-11 and just walking out with a case of Bud in each hand, me and my boys.

I had my crew - me, James, Amo, and sometimes Roger. No one ever dared to even try to stop me, and I'm lucky I never got caught and ended up in Juvenile or CYA. Yeah, I am lucky, I got to spend my youth on the streets in San Jose and Sunnyvale where I grew up. But, I did start getting arrested a lot for being under the influence of P.C.P 11550(B). I used to be proud to have the most 11550(B)'s than anyone else during my time. I use to think it was some thing to be proud of. It only carried 30 days in the county jail.

My ole' lady use to bring the kids to visit me at Elmwood, and was still smoking blast at the farm. That was my true love back then. Blast! K,J., P.C.P. Lenyos. We use to call them Lenyos. That was back in the days when the Blancos, Pardos, Rojas, Spencers, and many more were known families in S.J. I was pretty well known myself, and everybody knew the two-story house on Adrian Way. S.J. was all the way back then. I was always everywhere in San Jose, from the east side to the west side I was at every big P.C.P. and beer party throw down.

Finally, I ended up in State Prison. I was 22 years old. I had escaped from the farm at Elmwood. Walk away escape. The judge gave me a year in the county jail with no more probation upon my release. "I was stupid". I made the mistake of taking the "Homies" advice and turning down the one year in the county for escape. The homies said its better in the pinta and more freedom than being in the county jail for a year, and the food was better than in the county, (Santa Clara County), this was in the days before the new jail was built. The homies failed to mention the three years parole after I got out of the "pinta". Ever since then I still have my same old number I was given back in 1987. Still, not even goin' to prison or being on parole slowed me down. I got so many dirty bottles and I avoided so many dirty tests as well by drinking vinegar and water before a test. I did quite a few parole violations and I caught a prison term in 1990 for a new charge of burglary and forgery and again in 1992 after I paroled I was only out a month before I caught another case because of this female. I got married to someone I barely met and didn't know who talked me into marrying her had me arrested and charged with false-imprisonement.

She's a liar but I was on parole and that's all it took. I fought the case for two years and had a good lawyer, in the end I copped to the false accusation and took a deal for credit for time served and I had to start my parole again for three years. I never seen that female again after I got out of the Santa Clara County Jail in May 1993, and good riddance to trash anyways that's not important. What finally did slow me down was hitting a brick wall at 100 mph one day.

I ended up in prison "again" in 1994 after getting out of San Quentin for serving another parole violation for a dirty test from July 1993 to December 1993. I got arrested in February 1994 for absconding and being under the influence. I did another 80 days on a parole violation and got out in May 1994 for one week. I was arrested on May 23, 1994 for what started out at "shoplifting" but turned tragically into an armed robbery. I will save that story for another time but I have been in prison since ever since then. I haven't got out. I was sentenced to only nine years and I ran into that brick wall immediately as soon as I got to prison.

I was sent to Corcoran Level 3 and I was on the yard about 12 days when someone walked up on me as I was sittin' at the table on the yard with some ninjas playing pinochle and they tried to end my life. They was pretty serious about it because the cut was pretty deep. They missed my jugular vein by an inch, but if they had, I'd bled out in minutes. They had to suture the inside of my neck with twenty sutures before they could close up the wound with thirty eight additional sutures across from my chin to the back of my neck.

I literally seen my life flash before my eyes. I use to think that was cliché but I found out that when you're dying or about to die, you can see your life flash before you're very eyes in an instant! I thought I was gonna die, there was so much blood. My shirt and pants are soaked with my own blood. I laid there on a gurney calmly thinking that I'm gonna go to sleep and never wake up again.

After I lived through that, I slowed my roll. Even though I haven't got out of prison because I caught my second and third strike in prison before I paroled or was suppose to parole in 2001, I finally slowed down and I've learned that you have to stop and smell the flowers along the path life has made for you to follow because at the end of the road, you're gonna look back and wish you had slowed down just a bit just to look around, just to enjoy the beauty of the scenery along the way.

Once it's over, it's over, as if you didn't slow down while you had the chance to, you're gonna wish you had, believe me. I believe in "karma" and I truly believe I should have died that day I've never seen someone bleed so much and live. "Karma" gave me a second chance and the scenery in life is so beautiful, and the flowers smell so romantic.

I'm sending The Beat a copy of that medical incident report as proof, that I lived through this. As always 'till next time when pen meets paper and my next compilation of life story appears, peace out!

If Jesus Is a German Then I'm Cool on Christ

Our next writer is writing to us from California State Prison in Corcoran, Ca. We haven't heard from James in a while, but when we do we're glad to hear what he has to say. James has a very deep and political piece. The title is Called "if Jesus is a German Then I'm Cool on Christ" really describes what he thinks is on corporate America's agenda. James ain't trying to offend anyone or insult any religions. He just brings a valid point of view. So give James a moment of your time and read his piece.

When there's a depiction of Jesus Christ it's always a blue eye, long brown haired white man with a beard... Now, this in itself speaks to the so call Christian movement in Amerikkka and those who are behind it. We normally hear the Republican Party speak to these Christian values and what is in the best interest of Amerikkka...("While ripping them off every chance they get.") So who is Amerikkkan people?? Its definitely not "Blacks," because for 300 years in this country their interest has never been met only ignored, and it don't take a Rocket Scientist to see thee despair that plague the Blacks in this country...

It can't be our "Brown" Brothers, because their interest is just as irrelevant. Even with millions Marching for immigration rights they was dismissed as if they was invisible, yet their whole fight is sad especially since they are the true descendants of this land. The sons and daughters of the Real Native Amerikans, whose interest never mattered in this country under their conquerors. The one thing so disheartning about the immigration rights movement it is simply so the people can work for modern day slave labor with no benefits. I know many people come from hardship, but you'll never be seen as an equal under these circumstances.

You will do more harm then help, you can do more by fighting for the total liberation of all of your people. Then there is the Asian people who have been a voice that is unheard of all together plus; their interest hasn't been met in all its years and contributions to the Amerikkkan society. Then there is the Natives who simply been reduced to (Indians) Maya's, Inca's, Aztec's, "etc" does not apply anymore, they still exist on the same concentration camps they was related during their genocide, which almost was 100% success, so we know from the conditions in which these "Groups" exist in Amerikkka that when these Christian Republic/Democratic Politicians, "say for the interest of the Amerikkan people, their not referring to the previously mentioned group of people."

We can draw our conclusions from the horrible conditions these respected groups live in, that are deplorable at best... where their mortality rate is extremely high, health care is either denied or inadequate. Unequal education or none at all. Poverty and joblessness is prevalent through out their communities. May "I" add this is in the richest country in the world, and a Christian nation on top of that... So lets take a peek at this so call Christian Nation called Amerikkka... over 2.1 million incarcerated, (which is the world record for incarceration.) As well as state authorized executions in the name of Law and Order...(Modern day Lynchings.) 99.99% of the executions are poor Amerikkkan citizens, or the following groups I previously mentioned, which is 85% of them incarcerated.

They're the leaders in the distribution of porn, here and throughout the world. They're the leaders in the distribution of weaponry, as well as weapons of "Mass destruction" here and throughout the world. One only need to look to his/her community to see how prevalent these "Guns" are in our communities. They're the leaders in having more law enforcement then any country in the world, (except for china) whose population is 2.1 (Fascism) listening to all calls and watching everyone...

They're the leaders in exploiting racism, and racist policies that oppress and exploit as well as deprive people of color here and throughout the world. They're the leaders in distributing more drugs on its soil, and throughout the world. (Legal or illegal.) It is one of the most perversed societies. Remember the program to catch a (child predator) did you see those Christians? They exploit sexual content through every means possible.

Women are nothing but "Sexual objects" in the Amerikkkan society they are demeaned, devalued and irrelevant to mainstream Amerikkka... They are the pioneers of advocating "violence", rather it's through their imperialist means. Or fascist forces, where they come in physically and terrorize people, and countries of their living. They demonstrate this in their every day culture; For example; movies, music, television and etc. One form of violence is to show their military powers through movies toppling their enemies mainly other races and foreign enemies, this is designed to scare you into submission or have you think twice about even considering an attack against such (super power.) For example; Saving Private Ryan, Men of Honor, The Dirty Dozen, Pearl harbor, Jell Raisers, Rambo, and T.V. shows such as 24, The unit, NCIS, Law and Order, New York Undercover, NYPD Blue; LAPD, and Cops. I can go on and on.

Then there's the violence to encourage and glamorize one to participate in his/her own Genocide, which is why they make these movies. For example; Waist-deep, Blue Nights, Boys N da Hood, Amerikkka Me, Juice, Baby Boy, Amerikkkan-X, Scarface, The Godfather, Need I say more? These movies are used to play on our youth psychologically which encourage and glamorize the violence they perpetrate against their fellow Brother and Sisters and not feel nothing while exploiting their violent thuggish/gangsta behavior. Then the Cops, LAPD and other law enforcement agencies come to life and chase you down and put you exactly where you at.

It all go hand in hand... This Christian Nation is extremely violent and unjust, for not unjust us in Amerikkka, but throughout the world, and there so call leaders wouldn't have it no other way. Who made the G.8 world leaders anyway? A make up of 1 Christians all white racist/fascist and wanna be white "Elvis Presley" Japanese saying their the world leaders. What about other people of the world for example: Afrikans, Mexicans, Natives, Somoans, Hawiians and Arabs and a host of others.

By having the world peoples at their mercy does not interpret into being the world leaders, it only continues to confirm that through terrorizing the people of the world, will you feel that you all are in control of the people. All the same Amerikkka is known to the world as a super power as well as a super rich country, which is unfortunately true. But when one can see past all the prestige and hype, you too will beg to differ as I have because as rich as it is with money, and material possessions world resources etc.

It's very poor in human qualities, values, morals, integrity and principles. The disastrous conditions it has left it's so called Amerikkan citizens in, are (inhumane) at best. The destruction it has caused on the world population and the environment is catastrophic...

So I say again if Jesus is a German then I'm cool on Christ. It is again important to note that Amerikkan has a poor white class that exists which the Christian politicians use as "pawns" to fuel the racial division, who they see as

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JAMES CRAWFORD CONT.

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losers and rejects, but play a major role in spreading racists propaganda through various means; mostly in language. While the white Christian politicians institute their racist policies and terror in the guise of democracy and governing the Amerikkan people killing generations after generation in the name of Jesus Christ. Remember it was these same white racists fathers/forefathers who engineered "slavery" they are the same ones who introduced Afrikkan slaves to their Holy Bible and their Jesus Christ That millions of Blacks worship today without the slightest idea or clue to who they're worshipping. By the way it was the only book Afrikan slaves were allowed to read or was instructed to read…

This also apply to the Catholic who used the same tactics against the Natives and it's descendents. It's clear that we can be 150 years behind as a people due to the atrocities committed against us as a people. So this only means that we must fight back with "our minds" it's what their ultimately after. So hit the books, read the signs of propaganda and investigate everything even your closes friends/family road dogs conduct, and question why they do what they do, but mostly those who have power over "our" lives… because it's not you in control your life, but them in the name of Jesus Christ.

One love/ one struggle… although these imposters use Jesus Christ name to promote their agenda, from what I read Jesus was a revolutionary fighting for the poor against super powers like the Roman Empire, which is why they executed him which many call the "crucifixion" simply for the malicious way they executed him in order to put fear throughout all the people in the world who might be thinking of becoming revolutionaries as was Jesus. This might explain why we live in a Christian nation that does not fight for it's "poor" citizens only exploit them for profit. Because Jesus Christ is an example; of what will happen to you if you dare fight to save humanity…Peace, either we live with it , or rest in it.

RAYMOND MORIN

Our next writer is writing us from Arizona State Prison Complex in Buckeye, AZ. Raymond is a great writer that we haven't heard from in a long time. He always writes great pieces with descriptive detail that can really have you picture what he's thinking. He has a piece called "Heaven", in which he describes as heaven being home. He has a few other spiritual poems that are inspiring and special. So relax, open your ears and let some serenity run through them.

You.

In the quiet times when I am alone
Away from all the confusion
That is my day-to-day life
I think of you
When I can't be with you
I like to think about
How much you mean to me
How much our sharing
Has enriched my life
And when my quiet time
Had ended
I can return to the every day
Renewed for I find strength
And purpose
In my thoughts of you.

Believe

I believe in you
In your beautiful spirit, your goodness,
In the way you face each day
With a commitment to your life and
The things that really matter.
I believe in the decisions you make,
In the careful consideration you give
Each challenge, in the perseverance
You've shown when others might
Have misgivings.
I believe that you possess an extraordinary strength and endless
Reserve of resilience even more
Than you realize.
Jesus Christ you are a person of
Enormous courage, someone truly
Special in this world,
A rare and beautiful gift
From the heavens,
And I hope you'll never forget
That I believe in you.

Special

You saw something in me
That no one else did
When I was lonely you made me feel
Like I belonged
When I was uncertain
You helped me see things more clearly
You never gave up on me
Even when I was ready
To give up on myself
Everything is so much better
For me now
Because you saw
Something special in me

Heaven

In childhood's days our thoughts of heaven
Are pearly gates and streets of gold
And all so very far away
A place whose portals may unfold
To use some far off distant day
But in the gathering of the years
When life is in the fading leaf
With eyes perchance bedimmed by tears
And hearts overwhelmed with grief
We look beyond the pearly gate
Beyond the clouds of grief's dark night
And see a place where loved ones wait
Where all is blessedness and light
And overall we see the face of him
Who will bring us to our own.
Not to a far off distant place
For heaven is, after all, just Home.

RAY SANCHEZ JR.

Influenced

Influential
Charisma flows
From pen to those
Who feel these words
Unheard and unseen
Unloved and unclean
A prisoner
A convict
Ain't it a trip?
I can still influence
How your children think

A Response To Mikhail Markhasev's Piece

Where do I begin? How do I address what is wrong with our state's approach to juveniles in the justice system? First off, I believe, is the acceptance of responsibility by the parents of these misguided youth, as well as these who vote (or don't) for the laws that breed these young killas. We all have a part to play in out futures, and the futures of the youth of our state.

Prior to my life sentence, I could have voted for changes. I could have asked others in my family to vote. I could have done more. But I didn't. I failed our youth in this. This isn't just going to go away, and finding someone to blame isn't helping.

An elderly woman in an influential suburban neighborhood was robbed in the middle of the night. During this course of the robbery, she was hit, fell, struck her head and is now in a coma. The robber, an 18 year-old kid fresh out of CYA, has a meth addiction. He's been in and out of he system since the age of 12, and each conviction has landed him more time in harder facilities in the hopes he'll "rehabilitate". His P.O. sees him as another case file and does nothing to help him succeed in life. The DA's are only interested in being tough on crime. The people who vote for laws such as the three strikes law are only interested in looking him up. No one addresses what will happen once he finally is released. The people who believe these kids don't affect them because they don't live in "those" neighborhoods are now seeing how wrong they are.

This young man finally gets that stealing from other poor people doesn't pay off as much as it would if he left the inner city and get some retire for their stuff.

What happens in the ghettos, projects, and slums affects everyone. Who's the idiot who thought crime doesn't transcend social and financial divisions? Just because poor folks and dope fiends can't afford to live in your suburban dream doesn't mean they can't afford the gas money to go fudge it up, brah.

"Only a casket will straighten out a hunch back," is a view to many seem resigned to. Only death will correct the crooked is what that proverb means. Why do we let the child become crooked at all? How about, "It takes the whole village to raise a child"? As a village, California is failing. Life sentences aren't working. More prisons aren't working. If a mother is a child's first teacher, then the family unit also isn't working. It's time to stop focusing on what isn't working and asking who is to blame. It's time to ask what the solution is, and putting that solution in to play. Everyone has a chance to better our world. I've started with my daughter. I could install a bitterness of the police, laws, rival gangs, other races and beliefs. I don't. I am honest about my faults and try to equip her with the morals and ethics that will help her to make the right decisions in her future. I start with one child and pray that others out there do the same, whether or not that child is theirs, a niece or nephew, a lil' homie, or just someone in need of a friend.

To Mikhail, I pray for your health and happiness, and apologize for falling out of touch. Take care and God bless.

Our next writer we haven't heard from in a long time. Our long time friend Ray Sanchez Jr. is definitely not new to The Beat. He's an O.G. when it comes to spitting game in The Beat Within. He's one of the best writers when it comes to putting together flows and raps, with his extensive vocabulary. He is writing to us from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA. Ray comes with some tremendous word play but always has some important meaning behind it. For example, his piece called "My Upbringing," and it clearly describes Ray's upbringing in vivid detail. Not only does Ray write raps he writes a piece about how the system constantly fails our youth and he takes responsibility for not educating his peers. So peep Ray's stuff out!

What A Mess

You can catch cases behind changed faces
Get locked up behind bars and crammed in cramped places
Face it
Faceless statistics
Hit close to home when they reach to where you livin'
And check yo' dome
Check yo' zone
Quit actin' like the light is on but ain't nobody home
It's a given we save up, Latinos in bandanas
Get tribal fo' feeding grounds
John Henries, we swing hammers
Antagonizing a savage
Incredible damage could get done
Tryin' to salt up the homie skumbag,
Like pork slabs,
Is dumb
Someone who runs tongues
Could get mo' ninjas done than guns wit dum-dums
Hot ones will take yo' life once
But bumpin' gum figgas could get killas life,
Like multiple re-runs
And I put that on 'citas
They who ain't scared of no pinta,
Ain't spooked of no SHU term,
Fools learn
You might as well serve a snitch hot hollow tips since
More often than not
That rot will get ya' incredible cell bricks
These are big bread vendettas
That forced me to force these
Cats in all lead sweaters
A rep as a hitta'
Small time,
Nine ounce,
Dope game,
Wig splitta
With an arsenal and an attitude, wasn't a badder dude
To walk streets on creep status
And automatic up in foreign latitudes
Yadidimean?
Shootin' range gamed
No need for a laser beam
I schemed wit' the best of 'em
Strived to be unique wit my heat, instead
Got fed to the pen like young red and the rest of 'em
An assessment
To aggressiveness
Approximately 18 mo' years to never of this prison mess`

RAY SANCHEZ JR. CONT.

My Upbringing

First off,
Ya boy held fiah, spit fiah
Clothed in fiah
First desire was to be a Bay Area
Gangsta
In gangsta attire
Sired by a villainous cutthroat
Cut yo' life short
If you
Tamper wit' family matters
Get splattered wit' kinfolks
Secondly
My legacy of legal conflict
A constant
Begun the day my dad became a
convict
Competent wit' closet issues
Work and pay taxes
Societal actions
Then flip dope
Flip yo'
Melon
Short dough will split you
The game will spit you
Right out once it's chewed your soul
You hit the floor
Once you down, they kick you
Third
I'm nerd
Moms would beat my ass if I didn't
pass class
Smashed fast
Became an honor roll student
You wouldn't
Believe I sold crack
So fast
We grow up
Revert to tribal rivalries
Our 'hood we throw up
Throwin' up
Our individuality
Getting drunk on gang love
We bang, thug
Sick wit' power
These macs breed
Casualties
Bring ammo, please
'Cause we's reliving the cold war
Guard yo's
Fear foes wit' fo'-fo's
Hanging out car windows
Will take
Yo' guard
That's why I got mine
And you got yo's
Lesson fo'
Respect is synonymous wit' fear
'Round here
Lack of it could get you hit
Ripped up
Wit' multiple bullet holes
Fifth,
Get it strip
Yo' environment of grits
Pimp
Deal
Grind
Steal
Get off yo' ass if you wanna be rich
These are the elements of my
upbringing
Block captain balla
Held wright, hold nothing
Fatha, shotcalla', and always a dope
fiend
Tattooed tears and dead peers
Is what this life brings
Forget that rap glamour
You getting' sold a dream
Weighing souls on a 'beam
Takin' shhh at face value
But shhh ain't always what it seems.

C. ADAMS

JUST JAILHOUSE RELIGION

Our next writer is writing to us from a correctional facility in Snyder, Texas. Adams is not a new writer to The Beat Within. He always comes through with some good writing and powerful insight! He talks about using your time wisely and learning something. So listen to Adam's pieces and here his live testimony!

The air is thick with the battle for men's souls. Nowhere else on earth can the present of evil and all the powers of darkness be felt in such a tangible way than in prison. It is a cesspool filled with men who have committed every evil under the sun, a lost and forgotten world of inhumanity that breeds greed, violence, hatred, and prejudice. Those who cry out the loudest against the Lord are the ones most easily won; and now here is the battle fought more than when our knees hit the floor in prayer.

Prayer is not what we do to prepare for the battles each day. Prayer is the battle! It has been said that when the weakest saint is on his knees, Satan trembles. That may be so, how ever, Satan is no coward. He is a veteran of many battles, and he will rise to the occasion, when you are on your knee, he will attack your concentration, put doubts in your mind, and try to fill your mind with every weakness that has made you fall in the past. For those of you out there who consider yourselves prayer warriors. Those of you who pray kneeling beside your soft, warm bed or in a quiet praying room in churches with padded altars and especially those of you who accuse convicts of being a "jailhouse convert" let me offer you a challenge.

I invite you to try praying on cold concrete floor beside a head steel bed with two TVs blaring (basketball on one and Chuck Norris on the other) with fans of both yelling (one group for their team to win and the other wanting to see blood) and filled with men cursing and fighting, slamming dominoes, and yelling at each other across the room. It can be done. You can actually "leave" this place and find yourself kneeling before God of his throne of grace. The presence of the Lord arrives with such force and sweetness with each victory that comes from the battle with a smile of victory on your face, you find that your armor is bent, your body is bruised, old scars are and bleeding, and your sword is nicked and tattered but still sharp.

Oh how sharp is the sword of the Lord! It can never be dulled!!! "It's just a jailhouse conversion, "I've heard people say as if our salvation experience wasn't genuine personally. I wonder could they find God and remain faithful, a Christian under these circumstances? In order to do it you can't be just a Sunday Christian. For in prison there's an old saying, "you can't con a con". If you profess Christianity in prison, you'd better be prepared to live it every second of the day, or y'all that could be your last.

It takes continuous prayer. Try praying at all times in an environment that provides no quiet place, no peace any time day or night, try getting a man to give his life to Christ when the only place to knee and pray is in front of unbelievers, who give cat calls and cuss while you are trying to confess your sins to the Lord. You try walking down the hall to go to chapel with your bible in your hand as threats are hollered and names are called as you pass each cell block, and unbeliever who strikes you on the cheek again and again just as a game, and who will kick a Christian because Christianity means nothing to them. They weren't raised in Sunday school, and in prison the weak (and the meek, who are mistaken for the weak) are spit upon.

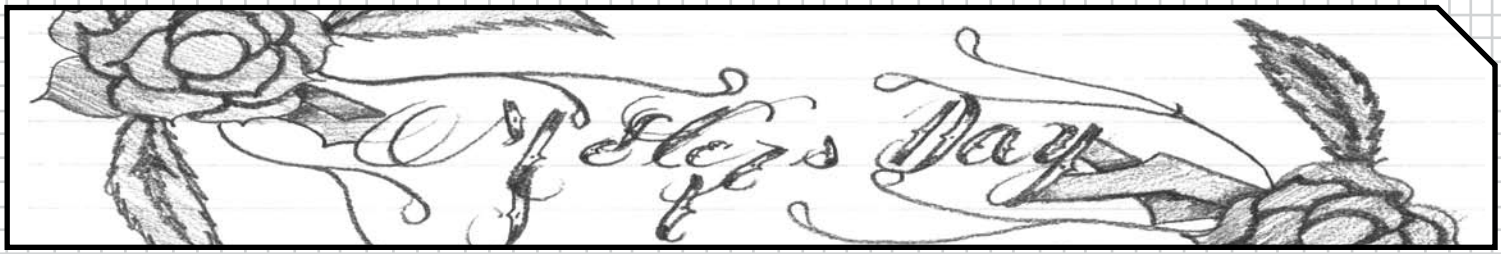
Think about these things this Sunday when you are riding peacefully to church, when you sit worshipping on a cushioned pew, and when you kneel, to pray at the altar.

Jailhouse conversions don't come easy. It is a battle hard fought, but oh how sweet the victory. In prison there are a lot of talkers, a lot of fakers and shakers, but Christians have to walk the walk 24 hours a day. In other words, you must proclaim the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.

2 Corinthians 11:22-29 Galations 6:35 Hebrews 13:3

My Testimony

If you've told me once, you've told me twice
When you mess with guns, you're messing with life
When bad things happen, it's never nice
What I did that night, I did on my own
hen I saw it coming, I should have left it alone
It was a mad feeling. All a mistake
Why can't it be a dream, so I can awake?
If I could go back to that very night, I'd lose the gun and I'd put up a fight
Please release this hurt from me. It hurts so bad to forget will never be
It's like a tape playing back in my mind over and over a constant rewind if I could push stop and record something new
Momma I'd record a better life for you
But I guess you're all right up there in heaven
I just wish you were still living, I'm sorry for what has happened
I just wish everyone else could close caption will it ever end
I think never because this mistake I live with ever and ever
I lost my mom and wife in 2006
The disease of cancer won the war
A bullet took my father in 82
Alone and frightened I stood holding the gun
I stood trial on her death for five long years
When the case was dismissed I was till shedding tears
I left GA after losing my life
I went back to Texas for a change of life
It was a change for a while but not for long
For I was back on drugs steady and strong
I hit the street for the first time on my own
Wanting death by drugs by drugs alone
I learned to hit licks and became a middleman
Money and dope flew through my hands
I caught my first dope charge in 94
For the first time in 3 years I was going straight in '03
When I got out of jail back to crime and drugs
My life went to hell
I went back to the hood
Now I'm back down for a violation it's my 5th time down
Man what have I done?
I sit within these prison walls with freedom on my mind
I've lived my life by breaking laws I took what I could find
With many dreams at times it seems I never really tried
But now I see and strive to be the man I am inside
My options here are limited there's not much I can do
It's dragging days jail-house it's hell I'm going through
I wished that I had listened to what my Mother used to say
I get I'd be a better man than the one I am today
Sometimes I feel I'm empty and sometimes I break and cry
I think of all I'm missing with each day that passes by
I wonder if I'm thought of and I wonder if they care
I wonder if they notice that I'm no longer there
Until my time I'm sure to stay wanting for the day to come
I'm free to walk away I pray my lessons learned and my courage never fails
So never will again I have to see these prison walls
I sit here and think about the time that I've wasted
My life's at a standstill from the drugs that I've tasted
Every time I seem to get on my feet I slip and fall back to the street
Staying ahead is hard to do when you have so many troubles locked up inside of you
Full of emotions that just won't quit
I'm living a life where nothing's legit
Alone at night I think of a time
when I was doing so well and my life was fine
But somewhere in time I took a turn to dangerous life
I've learned that in order to stay out of this man made hell-hole
I need to stay away from the old crowd and place I've been
To stay ahead and live a better way
I need to throw away drugs and take it one day at a time
So when I feel I'm about to fall
I'll go to my knees and give Jesus a call.



From Chains To Brains

They put these chains upon me to chain my spirit down
Although it would not come unwound
I set my mind to walk now to help to pass my time
Yet soon I saw a better way and I'll write it in this rhyme
There's so much I need to do
The school is free in here you see
I'll learn some stuff that's new
I'll take this time to prosper to gain a new
Found life to show them here I know how to steer away from that old strife
So when my time is finished in my life
I've placed this stain yet
I'll have used my time here wisely
Turned my life from chains to brains.

I left GA after losing my life
I went back to Texas
for a change of life
It was a change for a while
but not for long
For I was back on drugs
steady and strong

DARRON GARCIA

My Surmise

Our next writer is writing to us from the Sacramento County Jail in Sacramento CA. Darron has been submitting quite a few pieces lately. He has a lot of good advice to offer for all you readers out there. His piece called "Choices" really describes about the choices we all have and make on a daily basis. Darron also has a short story he's sharing with us but with a very valuable lesson behind it. So give Darron a read.

Voice of paramedic entering the emergency room " Doctor! I need a doctor over here fast!"

Doctor running to meet the paramedic, " What do you got?"

"We got 16 year old victim of multiple gunshot wounds to the body and head"

Doctor: "Vitals?"

"Blood pressure 90 over 40 and crashing fast! Faint pulse, victim unconscious."

Doctor to nurse: Prepare an O.R. now! We may only have minutes on this one."

The scene was totally chaotic as they rolled my body into the tiny room. All I could make out were a bunch of doctors in surgical masks surrounding me, poking and prodding the bullet wounds that tore through my body.

Doctor: "Hang on kid. I don't know how in the hell this happened to you. But we're going to do all we can."

As I lay there I felt no pain. I try with all my might to open my eyes but it's as if they're sealed shut.

Doctor; "We're losing him dammit! Don't you give up on us kid!" The noise slowly started to fade away.

Doctor: "He's flat lining! Get me the paddles quick!" I feel my body be jerked up and down on the table. I want to scream but was unable to voice my terror.

Doctor: He's lost so much blood. The bullet to his head caused his body to shut down. His pulse is extremely weak… I'm afraid we've done all we can for him. His parents should be notified. I'm afraid he wont make it through the night."

With a heavy sigh the doctors squeezed my hand and said, "I'm sorry son."

I was in a peaceful place at the moment. I could see the entire world around me in ways that I've never noticed it before. Everything seemed so much more alive, colorful, and pleasant. It's as if I'm dreaming or something? But how could that be? That last thing I remember was busing on them fools from the east side! I ran up in a pad and unloaded on them. Ha-ha they tried to bust back but not one shot hit me. It was like "The Matrix" or some shhh.

I noticed some blood on my jacket… but that must have been from them. It must be getting late? I better get home. My mom's gonna get mad. Everything seemed so surreal. It was dark and it started to get cold. Suddenly I seen a light at what seemed like at the end or a dark tunnel. I started to move toward it but the closer I thought I was getting the further away it seemed. I started to panic and run towards it. But the harder I ran, the dimmer the light got. I was tired, drenched in sweat maybe if I could just close my eyes for a second…

Doctor: "Time of death… 4:26pm. So much life ahead of you son. My God have mercy on your soul."

Who was that? What did you say? What time is it? Who turned the damn lights off? Momma I'm home momma where's everybody at? The next thing I knew if felt as if the floor beneath me disappeared. My body was hurling downward. I tried desperately to grab anything. There was nothing. Time and space were irrelevant… my body was free. Falling deeper and deeper into the abyss.

"Hail Mary mother of Jesus."

Before I could finish my prayer I noticed two bright objects raving toward me with increasing speed.

I had to blink my eyes a few times to fully comprehend what I was seeing. Within a few feet of me hovered two of the most beautiful creatures I have ever laid eyes upon. I was in the presence of angels. I could not speak or communicate with them but the look on their face was all I needed to know… for it was then that I realized what had happened. That this was no dream. That blood on my jacket wasn't from one of my victims it was my own. In the heat of the moment with all my adrenaline pumping, I didn't even realize that I'd been shot! I felt a wave of nausea set in because I knew…the doctors, this surreal feeling, that darkness, I died, I died that afternoon on the operating table. These angels… these angels weren't sent to save me. " Dear God, they came to say goodbye."

The moral of this story is an important one. "The wages of sin is death" Even though the boy was one of God's creations in his short lifetime he never took the time to know our Lord and Savior. He was not a believer in Jesus Christ. He had no faith. Like so many before him, he made a desperate attempt to save his life only in vain. His feeble attempt at a prayer fell on deaf ears. Only true believers in Jesus Christ will be saved. (John 3:16) Don't wait until your lying on your death bed or faced with mortal danger to call out to Jesus. Accept him into your heart now. Experience the wonderful changes that will take place in your life. You have a choice… you always have a choice. Make the right one.

Choices

Once upon a time in another life
I had a family that moved me and a beautiful wife
I was king of my castle, with my queen by my side
It was all going good, till I started to slide
One by one my dreams started to shatter
That wicked white powder was all that mattered
Some called it "speed", "crank," or "dope,"
I started doing lines just to help me cope
You think "once in awhile" but you'll lose control
I shot dice with the devil and lost my soul
I started staying out late and telling lies to my girl
The most precious thing in the world
But push came to shovr… so I pushed her away
A mistake that I made I regret to this day
But the party went on and I just didn't care
Till I started seeing shhh that wasn't there
I seen lil' green men out in from of my yard
Taking hit after hit… I was tweekin hard!
So I lost my job and count pay rent
The dope man taking my every cent
My family disowned me although it was tough
I was robbing and stealing… they had seen enough
I begged and borrowed from all of my friends
Around every corner… just more dead ends
I was outta control like a run away train
Like a dog with no home stuck out in the rain
I hit rock bottom and I fell to my knees
Said a prayer to the lord and begged him please
"Please help me Lord for I've become a weak man"
"I pray for the strength to follow your plan"
That was 10 years ago to this very day
God will work wonders if you start to pray
Two can change your life with God's power and glory
And have a happy ending to your life story.

How about, "It takes the whole village to raise a child"? As a village, California is failing. Life sentences aren't working. More prisons aren't working. If a mother is a child's first teacher, then the family unit also isn't working. It's time to stop focusing on what isn't working and asking who is to blame. It's time to ask what the solution is, and putting that solution in to play.

read the rest of Ray Sanchez Jr.'s BWO piece on page 68